



*Pazaryk Rug*

ORIENTAL  
RUGS  
AND  
THE  
STORIES  
THEY  
TELL

ARTHUR T. GREGORIAN

FREDERICK WARNE : LONDON

### *Pazaryk Rug*

The oldest known example of knotted pile weaving is a rug found frozen in a grave in the Altai Mountains by Soviet archaeologists. Known as the Pazaryk Rug, it is on display in Leningrad at the Hermitage Museum. This accurate reproduction was woven by some of Iran's finest contemporary craftsmen. The sophistication of this 2500-year-old carpet makes it clear that even in that remote time the art of rug weaving was well established and had a long tradition behind it. Many of the motifs shown in the Pazaryk Rug, the horsemen and the grazing reindeer in particular, still occur in the rugs woven by the Turkic-speaking descendants of the original rug's weaver, attesting to durability of folk motifs and the continuity of the tradition.

First published in 1967 by the Nimrod Press  
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Revised Edition Published by  
FREDERICK WARNE (PUBLISHERS) LTD.  
LONDON, ENGLAND  
1978

Revised edition Copyright © 1978 by Arthur T. Gregorian  
ISBN 0 7232 2105 7  
PRINTED IN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

I dedicate this book to my wife who is and has been  
a constant joy and inspiration. This book would never  
have been completed without her enthusiasm,  
help and encouragement.



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## PREFACE

Of all the traditional Persian artifacts, rugs and carpets are the most popular in the West. From the Renaissance on, they have served to add exotic glamor to the furnishings and decorations of Western churches, palaces and homes, and have been a powerful agent in transmitting a taste for Persian art to the Occident. With the growth of wealth and trade in the past two centuries, they have even found their way into less luxurious homes as a mark of refined taste.

And yet, there is a glaring dearth of good literature on Persian rugs. The general public has little idea as to where and how these exquisite pieces were woven, and knows even less about the esthetics of their varied designs and fascinating colors. An enquiring dealer, collector, or housewife does not find a ready literature to enlighten him or her on the various aspects of rug weaving or on the significance of rug patterns. The endless varieties of motifs employed

in Persian carpets often remain a mystery to the interested layman who seeks an interpretation. Such works as *The Survey of Persian Art*, (ed. A.U. Pope, London and New York, 1938-39) and Edwards' *The Persian Carpets* (London, 1953) remain, for all practical purposes, out of the reach of the general public.

Mr. Arthur Gregorian's attempt to explain Persian and related rugs, therefore, is a most welcome one. He writes not only with a wealth of practical information, but also with an intimate knowledge of the land and of the people who have created these rugs.

The carpets of Persia, like its miniature paintings, ceramics, and tile decorations, vigorously express the major features of the country's visual arts, that is, ingenious design, decorative abstraction, and exciting and harmonious colors.

Unlike some courtly arts of Persia, however, which catered to the taste of the elite, rug weaving, practised as it has been among tribesmen, villagers and people of the city, reflects the artistic impulse of the nation as a whole. The refreshing simplicity of geometric and angular designs of a Bachtari or Boukara rug testifies to the simplicity of life and concepts among a tribal people with an inborn artistic sense nurtured by age-old tradition. In contrast, the intricate design and delicate shades of the Isfahan or Kashan rug bears witness to the sophisticated outlook of a city poet or artist. Despite the abstract tendency in Persian patterns, we cannot miss an intense enjoyment of life imparted by the vivid and lustrous colors. It is this unique combination of abstract design and sensuous hues which makes the Persian rug a thing of beauty, and gives it an individuality all its own.

Mr. Gregorian explains these and many other aspects of Persian rugs. His approach, however, is not that of a cold analyst, for he writes with great warmth

and feeling. To illuminate the great artistic tradition behind Persian rugs, he draws on his vast personal experience, his many trips to Iran and his familiarity with village, city and tribal wavers. His feeling for Persian rugs pulsates through an engaging style, which is further enlivened by the revealing and humorous anecdotes he relates from his personal encounters. He is obviously in love with Persian rugs, and his love is contagious.

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of Iranian Studies  
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*"... boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away."*

The sands of the great Dashti-Lut desert are burying this humble Persian village whose inhabitants have fled before a force of nature they cannot control. Perhaps within these very walls the women-folk once sat at their simple loom and on its tightly stretched warp threads knotted the colored yarns they had spun and dyed. They wove into their rugs designs and pictorial imagination revealing their conception of beauty as they saw their world. Now the man-made forces of industrialization are destroying the simple world of the weavers as surely as the sands have destroyed their dwellings. This collection of hand-woven rugs, covering a span of many generations of natural creativity, is a memorial to a fast-disappearing form of self-expression, a true art form as well as a highly refined craft.

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the first publication of this book in 1949 there have been four reprintings with thirty-two pages added in 1957. In the period since 1949 I have made yearly trips back to the land of my birth. Throughout more than forty years, since I left Persia as a small boy, I had retained vivid memories and impressions of the people and the countryside. As refugees, our chief concern had been seeking food, shelter, and safety. The beautiful landscapes, the friendly people, the colorful mountains, and the landmarks of ancient, long-dead civilizations held no particular significance. But it was an entirely different experience to return to these same scenes with mature judgment, a deep, inherent respect for the people, a knowledge of the great artistic contribution they have made to the world, and an understanding of the problems they face in the complex international situation of today. Now I saw beauty where there had been none before.

Now I appreciated the techniques of rug-weaving which had been just commonplace tasks to me before. One of the most amazing things to me was that my memories had been so exact and that so little change had taken place in the provincial towns I knew best and among the simple peasant people whom I most respected.

After living fifty-six years in America I found it quite an emotional experience to revisit my own people, my birthplace, and to travel hundreds of miles at high speed in a Mercedes Benz, over the same ancient routes along which we had plodded for months in an ox-cart. Everywhere I found the same friendly people in the small villages. They were cooperative, hospitable, delighted to see a native son returned from America and still able to talk with them in the native dialects common to the whole northwestern part of Iran. Once I approached a villager, and spoke to her. I told her I was one of her people. She said, "If you are one of us why do you speak with such an accent?" I told her I had lived for forty years in America, and she answered, "Poor boy! To think that you have been away from home so long. It is good that you are back!" I asked her if I could photograph her, weaving, and she allowed me to do so.

Because the village people accepted me, I was able to photograph them freely, with the understanding that the pictures I took would be used for sympathetic interpretation of them to my American friends. They seemed to sense that I was not like other photographers who came among them occasionally to photograph them as strange and different people.

I have tried in the earlier editions of this book, and I am still seeking to make available to people of Western culture who love and appreciate Oriental rugs, a background of basic information, criteria for judgment, and a sense of

deep appreciation of this art form. I am, and I say it very proudly, a product of the Eastern culture which for centuries has created this kind of artistic expression. When I was a little boy in a small village in northwestern Iran, three miles west of Lake Rezaieh (Urmia), living in conditions which exist almost unchanged today in more than forty thousand similar villages in Iran, I can remember as one of my earliest memories playing on a rug which my father had brought home with him from one of his trips to Tiflis. The rug had a large medallion in the center, and two smaller ones at either end. I used to pretend these were *bostons* or gardens. The little animals scattered over the field I naturally thought were playing around outside the gardens, kept out as animals were from our cultivated areas. The borders I thought of as the walls around the *bostons*. A rug was as much a part of my heritage and environment as a fleet of small cars would be for an American child. After my years of refugee life, and my early years in school in this country, I re-discovered my heritage quite accidentally, by going to work for an Armenian rug dealer in Boston. Suddenly I became aware of a knowledge, an appreciation, an opportunity open to me as a son of two cultures.

For forty-five years I have been actively engaged, not merely in buying and selling rugs, but in interpreting, explaining, and awakening American friends to a real appreciation of the anonymous artistic expressions of a vast segment of the world's people, the segment from which I sprang. I have travelled, renewed acquaintance with the rug-making people of Persia, Afghanistan, Central Asia and Turkey, searched out the finest products of their art, imported them, described them, made them available to collectors, and kept many for my own collection. Happily for me, I have been able to make a life work of this life interest.

In 1959 I made my first return trip to Iran with my seventeen-year-old son,

who had heard all his life of "Persia" as a great fairy-tale. We travelled together over the roads which I had travelled on foot or in our ox-cart as a refugee. In 1960 my wife, my daughter, and I visited many other parts of the country, as well as my native area. Since then my wife and I have made four trips to Iran, four to Turkey, the last as recently as the spring of 1977. Our son did most of the purchasing this time. Each trip strengthens my conviction that rug weaving people are uniquely gifted people and are still, in spite of twentieth-century mechanization, pouring out works of art for their own personal satisfaction and expression. We who can appreciate their work are recipients of their unwitting gift to us. I personally feel real pleasure that more and more people throughout the world are coming to appreciate the aesthetic and practical value of the rugs made in Iran, Turkey and the Caucasus, of wool which cannot be equalled for this purpose in any other parts of the world, by craftsmen whose skill is inborn, and in patterns inherited from a rich artistic past.

It is my sincere hope that this enlarged edition of my earlier book will add to the sum of available accurate information in this field. Much was written about Oriental rugs, especially around the turn of the century when Europeans and Americans began to travel more freely in Turkey and Iran. Unfortunately, a great deal that was written then with the purest of intentions was incorrect. Because no one who really understood the people and their art immediately corrected many of the misstatements, they were repeated over and over, until the errors were widely accepted in this country and abroad. More cautious people, fearful of accepting what might be inaccuracies, adopted an attitude of hesitancy toward accepting *anything* written about the mysterious subject of Oriental rugs. Many other forms of Oriental art and culture have been thoroughly studied,

documented, and given the stamp of intellectual approval by scholars. But Oriental rugs remain the orphan of the arts in the twentieth century. This art form, perhaps one of the earliest and finest expressions of man's artistic, creative talents, has been appreciated and accepted by the Western world ever since rugs first were brought into Europe. But no one has ever approached their study with sufficient accurate knowledge and depth of real understanding to give to this highly specialized art a truly authoritative interpretation. As a result, we have a situation in which over and over again, in museum guides, histories of art, and descriptions of rooms decorated around beautiful Oriental rugs, the rugs either are not mentioned at all, or are hesitantly and inaccurately described. Studies are available on hundreds of minor art forms and all varieties of antiquities to enable a museum curator, art dealer, or decorator to classify, display, describe, and even price almost any piece of jewelry, woodwork, enamel-ware, pottery—even buttons and primitive embroideries—but when it comes to a rare Oriental rug he feels that he must be wary of accepting any individual's judgment or any written text. As a consequence we find in the finest museums such ludicrous or lamentable situations as, for example, an exquisite Melas or Kula rug displayed as an "Anatolian Carpet," or a rare Tabriz rug under a sign, "Northeastern Iranian Rug?" If this volume can assist lovers of Oriental rugs to understand and therefore enjoy more fully their own rugs, and those that have been brought together in whatever manner and with whatever errors in display, in our museums, it will have fulfilled its purpose.

Newton Lower Falls, Mass.

A.T.G.

May 1977



*Bidjar (Kurdish)*

*Circa 1800*

*Size 9.6 x 17*

This magnificent Kurdish rug is one of the finest examples to come out of Bidjar. The plain open field of terra cotta red with age has changed in color to the quality of a strained glass window. The variations in the red which are due to both changes in the dye lots and in the wool, heightens the effect. The jewel-like medallion seems to be casually placed on the field. It is gracefully proportioned. The main outer border uses the turtle design which is common to all Bidjar weavers. The inner triangular-shaped motifs and the center medallion use the Herati or fish pattern, another common Bidjar characteristic. Bidjar rugs are commonly referred to in the trade as the cast-iron rugs of the East. Since these weavers do so much embroidering and decoration on their garments I am sure they have introduced on the outer border a design which is very common to the finish of their embroidery work.

## THE PERSIAN RUG WEAVER

In Persia the art of rug making is as old as civilization itself. Although invasions and counter invasions have swept across Persia throughout its long and colorful history, weaving has never come to a halt. For centuries Persian rug-making has reigned supreme among the textile arts. Today when machines are the monsters of industry and the authors of countless types of textiles, Persia continues quietly and painstakingly to carry on its ancient rug-weaving tradition just as it has throughout its turbulent past. It cannot be by accident that this art developed to such perfection and has continued unchanged for so many centuries.

The native Persians are making rugs today under the same primitive conditions as those of the past, for the sheer delight of expressing themselves. While their product may eventually reach a foreign market, they are not working for immediate returns or a fixed profit. They simply have the desire and patience and ability to express themselves in this way. The urge toward this type of self-

expression is perhaps greatest among the lowly, isolated nomads who are to be found in Azerbaijan Province, near Shiraz, and among the Bachtuari tribes. Almost all the rug weavers of these sections are illiterate save some from the large cities. Thus weaving is for most of them the only way they have of expressing their innermost thoughts and fancies.

It seems to me from my early observations as a child and my more mature reflections upon the subject, that illiterate people are best suited for the execution of such time-consuming tasks as rug making. When you stop to realize that an ordinary 9 x 12 Persian rug may take a year, or ten years, or even a life-time to weave, depending upon the fineness of the weave and the intricacy of the pattern, you see that only people who are quite content with their lot in life could persevere to the completion of a rug. The Persians have this feeling of contentment, for they do not spend their lives trying to better themselves socially or materially. All their attention seems to be bent upon their work. They have little difficulty in concentrating upon it, for they are not distracted by the many gadgets that we here consider necessary to our living. All their joys, ambitions, and interest are funnelled into their one major creation. And the rug they make must be a worthy production, for it is open to criticism or praise from all the neighbors, rug weavers themselves, who seldom see anything good on another man's loom.

When I speak of the illiterate rug weavers, I am thinking particularly of the people in the village of Bidjar in Azerbaijan Province. (See p. 5) Most Persian villages are very much the same, but for some reason Bidjar made a great impression upon me when I passed through it as a youngster. The rugs from this village are as lovely as any that are woven in Persia. Their colors are rich and subtly blended, their texture firm, yet supple, their designs clear-cut and appealing. Al-



though the rug makers have hardly ventured outside their village limits, their artistic products speak the language understood by beauty lovers the world over. I am sure they do not draw inspiration from their homes, for I have seen the huts in which they live. The single room is almost three-fourths below ground, and is divided into family living quarters at one end and live-stock accommodations at the other. Because their winters are so cold they enjoy the warmth the animals provide. The one central opening in the roof lets out some of the smoke from their oven which is a pit in the floor and allows a little light and air to come in when the smoke dies down. Since they have no glass to cover the hole, snow drifts in also. Over the pit-oven they place a short legged table or *kursi*, on which they spread a large rug. Around the *kursi* they gather to sit with their legs under the table enjoying their central heat. The house walls are of sundried brick, the floor of hardened earth. There are no chairs or tables, aside from the *kursi*, for they eat and sit and sleep on their rugs.

These simple, primitive people look like a miserable lot to us. But to be able to create what they do, they must possess in their minds the wealth of potentes, the vision of poets, and the imagination of Oriental story-tellers. They never expect to better themselves materially so they spend no serious thought upon material possessions. It is undoubtedly their Omar Khayyam philosophy, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die," that has kept them so backward and primitive. Yet it is not fair to say that because they are uneducated they are unhappy. I believe in their case the contrary is true. They are happier, for they have so few conflicting interests to take their attention. The range of their material desires is limited by the range of their outward vision.

But how infinite is the range of their vision for things of eternal value is

best revealed by their artistic blending of color and design to express their thoughts. Sitting in their dark, evil-smelling, smoke-filled little homes all winter long, their inner eyes see the beauty which their expert fingers capture and create. Illiteracy has not condemned them to spiritual ignorance and brutality, but it has turned their minds inward upon things of spiritual value. I am not championing the cause of illiteracy; I am simply trying to interpret for these inarticulate people what they are able to express only through their rugs. And what a world of pleasure the rugs they have dyed and planned and knotted in their dismal quarters have brought to lovers of beauty the world over! Untold thousands of cultured families in America and the rest of the world have one or more of their jewel-like rugs. They have expressed in their special way something which sympathetic hearts appreciate, whatever tongue they speak.

I can never repeat too often the fundamental fact that if one wishes truly to understand Oriental rug weaving as an art, one must first know the people who have created the art. The Persian's mind is full of great yet limited ideas and dreams. He never expects to realize these dreams himself. In fact he wants and expects nothing for himself but what his father had before him. He would much rather listen to or repeat the story of Harun-al-Raschid than *be* Harun, just as he would much rather imagine the delight of counting the king's gold than be burdened by owning it. But the rug he makes is his own, created out of the materials he has at hand, with no expenditure of money on his part. It seems to him that he has made something out of nothing, and it is the expression of himself. These basic facts apply to most Persians. As a race they are dreamers and fantastic planners. The many different types of Persian rugs are all the work of the same race of people living at different cultural levels. Their heritage is the same, their native talent the same, but they are all individuals and their work



I travelled miles out of my way to find this villager who had, I was told, some fine rugs to sell. He was full of apologies. He had just recently sold his last completed rug. Now he had another one on the loom, but only four or five inches had been completed. I suspected the wool was from these recently shorn sheep.



The wonderful wearing quality of Persian rugs, the beautiful sheen which they acquire through years of wear, the softness and resiliency of the nap, all these attributes are made possible by the wool of the fat-tailed sheep.

There are more than forty-thousand little villages throughout Persia. Most of them are of sundried brick houses like this one in Azerbaijan Province.



A tribal woman carries water from the well on a street in a village south of Shiraz.



is individual though closely related.

Fortunately for us who wish to possess Oriental rugs, these people have no idea of how to sell their product. Without any sense of time, they set no value upon their hours of work. Their day is from sunrise to sunset and every day is like another unless some great celebration or disaster takes place to set one day apart from the others. It is a commonplace to find a whole village where no one remembers his birthday, unless he was fortunate enough to be born at the time of a great famine, earthquake, flood or invasion. Peaceful days follow one after another without being recorded. Craftsmen in all lines look forward to the day when their task will be completed. And with these people the completion of a rug calls for a great celebration which is itself almost recompense enough for their hours of labor. No one of them would say to another in American fashion, "How long did this rug take you?" Instead, he would comment, "Why, it seems only yesterday that you were shearing the sheep for the wool!"

The weaver is childishly delighted with his work. Generally he is anxious to sell it or exchange it for something he feels he needs. If he is a family man he may be anxious to secure a new calf or a colt. If he has other ambitions, he may wish to move into the twentieth century by purchasing a small transistor radio. Whatever he is able to get pleases him for he feels that the rug cost him not one cent. He made it all himself. Then he prays to Allah and thanks Him for His great wisdom and understanding in providing him, a simple weaver, with such extraordinary comforts and luxuries. The product of this poor man's infinite time, pains and devotion goes to a foreign market anonymously. It is the vibrant, living reflection of its maker, and even though it grows old and threadbare, it will always demand respect and appreciation.

## WHAT RUG WEAVING MEANS TO THE PERSIAN

When I was a little boy in Persia, my father told me one of the old Persian folk-tales, which has always seemed to me particularly interesting as a commentary upon what rug weaving means to the Persians. There was once a Persian nobleman who went out gazelle-hunting, and stopped to seek shelter from a sudden storm at a farmer's cottage. The farmer's beautiful daughter waited upon him, and he immediately fell in love with her. He made himself known to the farmer and requested his daughter as his wife. Much to his princely surprise the farmer asked him what other qualifications he had to offer besides proficiency in gazelle-hunting. Of course he had none, and he felt in his position that he needed no others. But the farmer was firm in his demand that the prince must master a trade and only then could he have his daughter. The young prince returned to his father in Isfahan and with the help of the palace weavers soon was able to weave rugs as fine as any they could produce.

But this story has another chapter. Years later the prince was kidnapped





*Belouch Rug*

*Size 4 x 6.6*

Primitive, bold, and full of imagination. Note how the strong feeling for design controls the form of the figures. (See page 82.)

by the ferocious Tartars from the north. He was held captive in a dungeon waiting for a king's ransom. While in the dungeon he wove a beautiful rug and in the border he put the story of his capture. He persuaded his guards that a huge reward would be theirs if they presented the rug to his father. When his father saw the rug he set out with an army to rescue his son. So the prince owed his life to the demand of a humble farmer that he learn a useful trade.

As this story illustrates, rugs have been used as princely gifts and for kings' ransoms down through the centuries. The weaving of rugs has not been considered too humble an occupation for princes nor too exalted a task for peasants. In all strata of society, in every age, and in every part of Persia, there have been weavers.

Into their rugs they have woven age-old folklore, superstition and all their racial heritage. For thousands of inarticulate people this has been their only means of self-expression. Their rugs are the mute testaments of a very large number of vigorous, practical artists.

However, it is not true that every individual Persian weaves rugs. Actually rug weaving is a trade which has been perfected and handed down in certain families. Other families have developed silver-smithing, wood-engraving, or wool-dyeing. All these arts and crafts originated under primitive conditions, and many of them, particularly weaving, are still carried on according to the same old traditional methods.

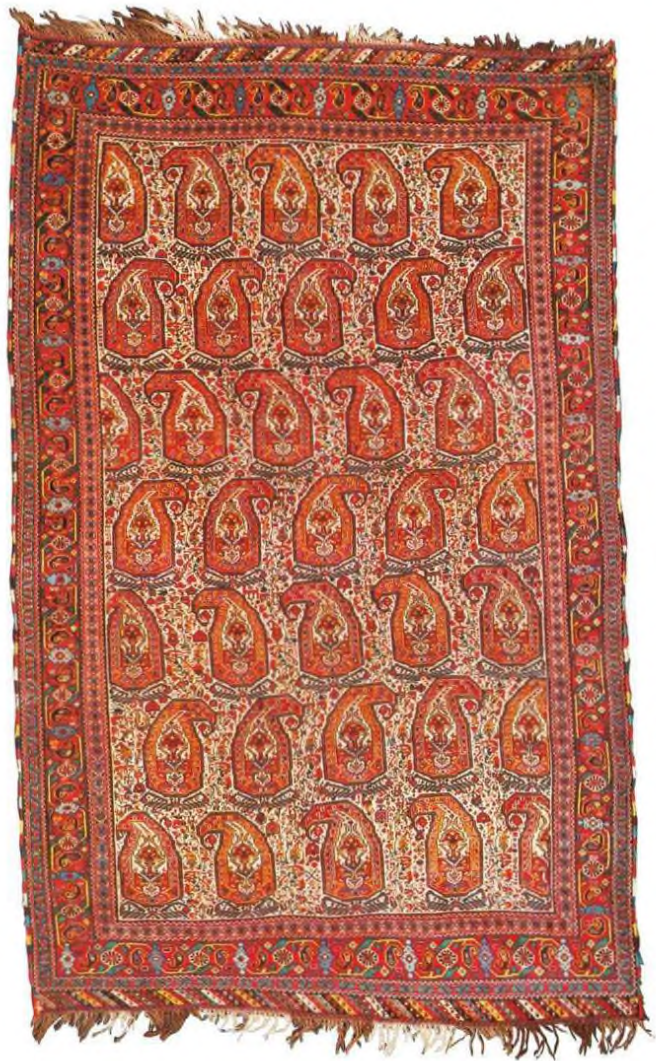
Weaving began as a purely utilitarian project, carried on by every family out of necessity. The ancient Persians needed clothing, tents, and saddlebags. They had only the materials provided by their natural surroundings from which to make these things. Wool was plentiful on the backs of their sheep, and they

*Qashqai (Persian)*

*Size 4.9 x 7.9*

*19th Century*

An excellent example of Qashqai tribal weaving using Persia's famous *naksh-i badam* or almond design. The weaver has shown imagination in the creation with the *badam* of a small tree-like motif with extending branches. The extra band on both ends is in the style of Central Asian weavers. The multi-colored edging is original. The ivory field is well covered with interesting detail giving the background a lace-like composition.







*Keshan—Silk & Silver (Persian)*

*Size 4.6 x 7.9*

*19th Century*

This early 19th-century masterpiece is one of a kind, in craftsmanship and intricacy rivalled only by those 17th- and 18th-century carpets made of silk, silver and gold which were intended as gifts between royalty. The embossed effect is created by two sculptured levels of silk contrasting with a flat-weave of silver-wrapped threads. The extreme tightness of the weave is more extraordinary when one realizes that the silver-wrapped strands could not have been easy to work with. Also in keeping with the exquisite craftsmanship is the choice of rich, subtle colors and the quality of the silk. Despite its age the rug glows with fresh color and cleanly etched patterning. The main border has as additional interest the miniature-like scenes of Persian palaces and gardens. An extremely choice and unusual rug.



began to weave the everyday things required to supply their needs. This early weaving was flat, like basket weave, or like the *kilims* (See pages 99, 179, 201) they still weave today. Since no knots were tied, the surface was smooth and without a woolly nap. Out of this flat-woven material they made every sort of textile product they needed.

Nobody knows just when or how early weavers learned to tie colored yarn to the warp threads, and then clip the ends of the yarn to form the thick, soft texture that we now have in all Oriental rugs. Certain families developed certain skills and techniques in weaving which they passed on from father to son, generation after generation, until those families became known as families of fine weavers. The same thing is true of other families who developed certain processes for dyeing wool. To this day these families enjoy prestige as dyers of special colors that no one else can duplicate.

Persian sheep (See page 5) have been an important factor in the development of Persian rug weaving. They supplied not only meat, milk, and cheese for their owners, but their wool also provided the material for almost all their other needs. The sheep determined the way of life of their owners, too. People who depend upon sheep must have grazing lands for them. If a group of families were so fortunately situated as to have ample grazing lands right where they were, the tribe developed a settled existence. If, on the other hand, greener pastures had to be found constantly, clans or tribes such as the Qashqai, Afsharis, Bachtiaris, and Belouchis would pack their belongings on their few donkeys and travel together after their herds. Their descendants are still wanderers today and many of them are still covering the same routes that their ancestors followed from pastureland to pastureland. Incidentally, these wandering nomads now, as in the past, weave some of our most interesting Oriental rugs.

Through the long centuries of Persian history, life in Persia has remained more or less static. There have been periods of conquest and invasion, periods when armies have marched out of Persia to conquer the world, or when triumphant hordes have swept in from the outside, bringing foreign influences. But when the tides of invasion or conquest receded, more influence had *gone out* from Persia than had been brought in to her. Centuries of turmoil, untold hardships, a minimum of necessities, and few comforts have not changed or dulled the artistic power of the Persian craftsman. Today as for generations, he carries on the traditions of his family and his tribal group.

Thus a nomadic weaver of a Shiraz tribe (See pages 9, 17) pitches his tent temporarily in whatever grassy spot he finds himself. There he lives and weaves his rugs just as his people have done for centuries past. Since his loom covers the entire floor area of the tent, the size and shape of his rug is determined by the size and shape of his living quarters. His rugs and the other rugs woven by his tribesmen will have certain characteristics in common. His ideas are usually suggested by other rugs that he has seen which were made by his family or by other families in the village. The basic patterns of all rugs woven in this vicinity will be similar. Yet each weaver's rugs will bear the stamp of his own individuality. Rug weaving is a strictly personal affair within the limits of the tribe's techniques. There are hundreds of different rug-weaving groups in different cities, villages, or nomadic tribes, each separate and distinct from the others, each weaving according to its own age-old traditions. Every group gives its name to its products, creating a colorful array of Persian rug names. For example, Tabriz rugs are named after the city of Tabriz and Bachtuari rugs are named after the various Bachtuari tribes.

*Qashqai Horse Cover*

Qashqais are rooted in the nomadic ways of their ancestral life in Central Asia. Everything they weave, whether it be a rug, tenting material or a saddle-bag such as this charming horse cover, takes its inspiration from the vast open spaces and the life from which they came. The delightful introduction of a series of persons, all with their arms akimbo, adds a lively human quality to this lovely piece. Decorations in the borders and the extended flaps are similar to what they use in their rugs. This trapping was woven in two sections and sewed together in the center. The two pieces do not quite match. I am sure they would have been pleased, but even more surprised if they had.





A Keshan rug of exquisite workmanship.

At one time or another Persian rugs have been imitated in almost all the countries of Europe and in Asia. No imitation has survived any length of time. But weaving rugs is peculiarly the native art of the Persians and to a lesser extent of the Armenians, the Afghans, the Seljuks and a few neighboring people. The making of a Persian rug with its infinite number of knots to be tied by hand, requires untold time and patience. Sometimes it consumes the lifetime of a weaver. Because the Persian weaver has talent, time, and the best wool in the world for carpet making on the backs of his fat-tailed sheep, he has developed his art to a degree unequalled elsewhere in the world.

As I emphasized in my last chapter, and can never overemphasize, weaving is the self-expression of the Persian. He puts into his work his ideas, simple or subtle, according as he is a simple or a more complex individual. The childish weaver tries to weave a picture of his pet goat into his rug (See pp. 13, 47). He may find that he can best fill a particular space in his design by depicting the little fellow with five legs instead of four, or he may find it impossible to include his head. He is as naive as a five-year-old, drawing pictures. A cultured Parsee of Kirman, on the other hand, will attempt to express in his work his well thought out philosophy of life. He may use the traditional tree of life pattern, working it out in great detail (See pp. 42, 44, 56, 87). None of these rugs is cold and machine-made, but each is the living monument of an individual's way of looking at life. It is this individuality which endears them to the sensitive and appreciative. It is this, too, which makes them impossible of imitation.

It is easy to see, then, why Persian rugs are so versatile. There is a size and a color combination to suit every purpose imaginable. In choosing a rug, one should first of all have in mind the purpose and the place for which the rug is



*Qashqai (Persian)*

*Size 4.4 x 5.10*

*19th Century*

Woven about 1850, this rug is a product of the Al-Saadi Afshar tribes, who settled in the area south of Kerman although they originated in the Persian Azerbaijan. They are Turkic-speaking people, and their rugs like most nomadic creations are all wool. The dyes are vegetable derivatives, and the yarn was hand spun. In some of their rugs only one medallion is used, and the vases have stylized flowers in them; this example has an empty vase at either end. Most rugs of this family show a strong use of coral and blue. In color and design there is a marked resemblance to the rugs woven in Kashgar by the Turkic peoples of Chinese Turkestan. Like many Central Asiatic rugs, this rug has an extra border of design at either end. Note the primitive treatment of stylized barnyard animals.





*Serab      Size 3.4 x 11      Circa 1900*

intended. All Persian rugs are long-wearing but some stand very rough usage better than others. Choice of color and design depend entirely upon the individual's taste. Properly selected, each rug complements the others and together they enhance the charm of the furnishings of the room, becoming an inspiration and a joy to live with. It need be no matter for concern that a rug is coarse in texture. One who understands that it reveals the maker, realizes that a coarse rug is as natural and true an expression of one tribe as a fine, silky rug is of another. He will not believe mistakenly that a coarse rug is necessarily an inferior rug. In the same way he will appreciate the fact that color changes in a rug do not mean that the rug has faded. Vegetable dyes never really fade, they mellow. Often a weaver dyes several lots of wool during the progress of a rug. A weaver is an optimist by nature, and no matter how little wool he has to start out with, he persuades himself that it will be enough. When he finds that one color has given out, he has to dye a new lot. He measures his dyes by handfuls of roots

or herbs, and cooks them varying lengths of time over fires of irregular temperatures. Naturally his results vary in shading. But these color changes (called *abrash*) only add charm to the finished product. In the same manner, rugs are often uneven in their measurements, for their makers believe that only Allah makes things perfect and regular.

Today, as the world shrinks and men's understanding of each other becomes broader, a study of Persian rugs is actually an introduction to the understanding of another race of people who are rich culturally and historically. It is sad to realize that a nation which played such a dominant role in developing the culture which we have inherited from the past, should be today one of the last races to come to our attention for study and understanding. By learning to appreciate their handwork we come closer to an understanding of the hearts and minds of this ancient people.

A nomadic Qashgai family was weaving a beautiful Shiraz rug on a horizontal loom in this black goat's hair tent pitched on the plain of Merv-i-Dasht near Persepolis.



Outside view of the same tent.



## A SIMPLE METHOD OF RUG CLASSIFICATION

Lovers of classical music are generally lovers of other forms of artistic expression. All art comes from the sensitive hearts and minds of individuals and speaks to other appreciative hearts and minds. Throughout the world in homes of culture, there is music. And almost universally in these same homes there are one or many Oriental rugs. They appeal so strongly to us, yet they come from a far-away land with ways that are almost all foreign to us. I believe, however, that there is a close affinity between Persian art forms and our own artistic feelings. For centuries Persians have been masters of design in its manifold uses. Their work was admired, taken over, and copied by European and Asiatic artists long ago. It has come down to us as part of our own heritage.

We feel nothing strange or foreign about their work with its familiar patterns—the so-called “palm-leaf” design, the Guli-Henna, the eight-pointed star of the Medes and Persians, or the Herati rosette surrounded by two encircling leaves or fishes. We find the wide variety of colors and design complimentary to our



*Tabriz Rug (Persian)*

*Size 7.6 x 10.10*

Tabriz weavers quite often use this familiar Herati or Fereghan pattern with turtle borders. The two fishes encircling a rosette are decoratively colored in coral and light tile blue. The background is deep blue, while the border is soft antique terra-cotta. The texture is supple and colors mellow. Tabriz weavers are ingenious and versatile. They do not confine themselves to one typical pattern. This Herati motif is perhaps more commonly used in their traditional weaving, but one often finds some of the finest weaving delicately done with the famous Ardebil patterns. Tabriz weavers also make rugs that look very much like Isfahan rugs. Sometimes they are so much alike it is difficult for a novice to tell the difference. One unfailing mark of distinction is that the Tabriz will have either coral or soft terra-cotta reds, and the Isfahan will have rose or cranberry reds. Both rugs use light blues generously, the only difference being that Isfahan blues are a little more electric than those of the Tabriz weavers.



own furnishings. When we step into a home where Oriental rugs have been carefully selected to harmonize with each other, and with the rest of the interior decoration, we feel a deep sensuous delight and satisfaction. But when we can identify each rug and greet each as a familiar friend, how much richer is our enjoyment! A knowledge of them is no harder to gain than a knowledge of period furniture.

I want to suggest to you a very simple way to distinguish the three main types of Oriental rugs. All of the many kinds of rugs can be grouped in three distinct classifications according to their basic patterns, as rugs of *geometric* design, of *floral* design, and of *conventionalized* design. These three classifications cover all Persian rugs woven. An understanding of this way of classifying rugs facilitates an understanding of individual rugs. The moment we place a rug in one of these classes, we understand the type of weaver who made it and his station in life. I have discussed the way each rug is a testimony of its remote, unknown weaver. We have seen how the weaver puts years of his life and all his talent into the weaving he does. Unconsciously he shows us the kind of person he is. He gives us a key to understanding him, and a method of classifying his rug at the same time.

The weavers of the geometrically designed rugs are simple, natural people whose only possessions are the clothes on their backs, their tents and trappings, and their herds of sheep. Their wealth is counted not in dollars but in the amount of their livestock. Spiritually they are dominated by their belief in forces seen and unseen. Superstition rules their lives. All this is apparent in their handiwork. They are for the most part members of wandering nomadic tribes, each group isolated from the others and self-sufficient. Each tribe retains



*Keshan (Persian)*

*Size 4.5 x 6.9*

*19th Century*

The weaver of this rug tried to create a forest scene with all the animals that might be found in a jungle. There are trees growing from the ground and others in vases, twisting and turning like vines to form a harmonious color and design pattern. The rug's field is enlivened with deer, birds, cranes, and two snakes climbing the larger trees. Two monkeys can be seen in the upper trees, seemingly eating grapes. The border with its dark background sets off the designs of active animals clearly and sharply. The woman from whom we acquired this beautiful treasure told us she had found it in a neighbor's trash can.



its own laws and customs, yet they have much in common with other tribes for they are all leading the same sort of existence. They are still following the same pattern of life their ancestors developed centuries ago.

When you see one of these nomadic rugs you recognize it at once by its simple patterns (See pages 9, 15, 41, 106, 147), always strictly geometrical, sharp, stiff, and angular. These rugs are always composed of a series of medallions, large or small. This is an identifying feature of the work of the nomads. So when you see a rug that is made up of sharp, angular designs and medallions, you can be absolutely positive that you are looking at the product of some isolated, unknown nomad who never dreamed as he sat making his rug that it would adorn the floor of some foreign home, to be looked upon as a cherished possession. Although there are dozens of rug names to distinguish the different tribes which produce these rugs, yet all the rugs within this classification have these characteristics in common. Not only are their patterns all sharp and angular but their colors are bright, gay, and bold, reflecting the weaver's wild, bold existence. For example, hardly a rug comes out of Afghanistan, land of the Boukara rugs, that is woven without some shade of warm red for a dominant background color. All Kazak rugs are woven with sharp reds, blues and natural whites. Again in the nomadic Bachtiani rugs, bright yellows, greens and reds predominate. Descendants of some of the ancient Seljuk Turkish tribes now living a settled life in Anatolia are still weaving in the traditional nomadic style of their ancestors.

These simple nomads live from day to day. They do not plan for the future for they have nothing to plan for. They know that they will move to another pasture when the green grass where they are is gone. But beyond that they do





A Turkish shepherd in his heavy felt cloak or *boorka* tending his sheep.



A shepherd's hut in an olive grove near Melas in Turkey. Inside walls have a rough mud plaster. Note the fireplace on the left at the end of the hut.

A detail of Persian spearmen from the wall frieze of the Grand Staircase of Persepolis. It is interesting to note that the cypress motif is used in Persian design even to this day, especially in Qum, Kirman, and Bachtuari rugs.



Looking to the Apadana, or grand audience hall of King Darius at Persepolis, Takte-Jamshid to the Persians. Built in 518 B.C., the great palace was destroyed by Alexander the Great in 321 B.C.



not look ahead. Their weaving shows the same lack of foresight. Medallions can be repeated to make a long runner, or the work can be terminated after two or three, and the finished work will be complete. (See pages 168, 177.) It would be impossible for a nomad to plan mentally a complicated pattern; it would be just as impossible for him to remain physically in one place long enough to complete a large, complicated rug. Consequently all their rugs are of scattered size, or they are runners.

Going to the opposite extreme the weavers of the floral patterned rugs (See pages 10, 21, 44, 48, 51) are philosophers and poets. They are the leaders in Oriental art and handwork. They are the cunning designers and the creators of Persia's most magnificent works of art—mosque, miniature, or palace-size rug. They represent generations of culture which culminated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and which reigns supreme artistically today. So when you see a rug of intricate, interlaced, flowing pattern, you can be perfectly sure that it is the work of this cultured class of Persians. Their work and their lives are a far cry from that of their brother nomads. They are not content with bare existence. Their homes are palatial, their mosques exquisitely built and adorned, their philosophy complex. And their handiwork is a reflection of their pattern of living and thinking.

Usually these people live in the larger cities of Persia, like Tabriz, Teheran, Meshed, Kirman, Qum, Isfahan, Keshan and a few others. Often they live in the very homes that have been their families' for generations. Most of them are rich in material things, and have the facilities for weaving palatial rugs. When one of these weavers begins a rug it is not a haphazard undertaking as it is with the nomads. The pattern, the size, the color-range are carefully planned before the rug is started. Quite often the whole rug is drawn in detail and worked out



*Afshar-Dehaj (Persian)*

*Size 4.4 x 5.10*

*19th Century*

Woven about 1850, this rug is a product of the Al-Saadi Afshar tribes, who settled in the area south of Kerman although they originated in the Persian Azerbaijan. They are Turkic-speaking people, and their rugs like most nomadic creations are all wool. The dyes are vegetable derivatives, and the yarn was hand spun. In some of their rugs only one medallion is used. In color and design there is a marked resemblance to the rugs woven in Kashgar by the Tunkic peoples of Chinese Turkestan. Like many Central Asiatic rugs, this rug has an extra border of design at either end. Note the primitive treatment of stylized barnyard animals.





*Heriz-Serapi (Persian)*

*Size 9.3 x 12.4*

*19th Century*

A graceful, primitive Heriz woven in the best tradition. The central medallion with its jewel-like facets rests on a soft, coral-red field. A graceful, geometrically stylized garland frames the medallion and there are stylized trees and blossoms covering the field. Age has accentuated the color changes in a pleasing manner, both in the red field and most notably in the dark brown borders. Although the medallion is very large, the rug is well-balanced and has an open, airy feeling.



in color as a guide for the weaving. When the weaver ties the first row of knots he envisions the last row that will complete his work. Truly he has the mind of an architect.

Since they are cultured philosophers, life for them is not a violent struggle for existence. The cruder tasks of everyday living are done for them by the family servants. To them life gives leisure, comfort, and stability. Their harmonious existence is admirably depicted in their subtle, soft color blending and their intricate, detailed designs. While red is a dash of bold color to the nomad, a cultured Isfahani sees it and uses it in a whole range of subtle shadings.

There is even greater diversification among these floral rugs than among the geometric types. In this category the home decorator finds rugs shaded from deepest red to lightest ivory, depending upon the localities which produce them. Thus the weavers of Kirman for some reason prefer pastel rose, blue, and ivory, while the weavers of Meshed show decided preference for cathedral reds, deep blues and some gold. The weavers of Tabriz rugs freely use a wide range of colors, with comfortable effects.

Because these weavers are so painstakingly careful in their work, their designs sometimes appear perfectly rhythmical and regular to the casual observer. But upon closer examination one discovers the same slight irregularities that are revealed in all Oriental rugs. They are cunningly concealed by the floral weavers while they are flaunted naively by the nomads.

Those who weave rugs of conventionalized patterns (See pp. xviii, 19, 35, 67, 129) are a third type of individuals, intermediate between the rough nomads and the city people. For the most part they are country folk, plain, simple people, farming for their livelihood and weaving rugs during the long winter



An intelligent, and charming girl weaving on an intricate Isfahan rug. What we see is the back of the rug. She has been working on it for more than three years.

months when snow and cold keep them indoors. Their fingers work busily during the short hours of daylight, or later by the light of the sputtering castor-oil lamps recessed in the sun-dried brick walls. In spite of their humble existence they are, like almost all Persians, visionary and capable artists. They interpret their ideas through rhythmic, related patterns, often monotonous like their own lives. They lack the polish of the cultured Parsee, but their civilization is much more advanced than that of the primitive nomadic Kurd. Of all Persians they probably work hardest for the slight material compensation they receive from life. Their existence has none of the glamor of the free-roving nomad, and none of the graceful ease of the city people. All this is, of course, reflected in their rugs. The weavers of Saraband rugs (See p. 39), for example, repeat their distinctive pattern row after row, with a monotony like the passage of their days. Yet most of us feel a satisfying peace in this pattern, for truly the weavers must be at peace with themselves and their way of life. All these weavers are first and foremost designers, consciously or unconsciously creating pleasing, comfortable effects.

Whenever you see a rug whose design is composed of individual motifs, related but not joined to each other, you may be quite sure you are looking at one of these rugs of conventionalized design. The Saraband, the Herati, the Senna, the Fereghan are typical conventionalized patterns.

This quick resumé of Oriental rug classification does not attempt to tell you how to identify individual rugs. But this system of classifying helps you to see quickly what type of rug you are examining. To be able to associate any rug at once with the type of culture and people who produced it, greatly increases your enjoyment and appreciation. The next step is to be able to analyze each rug and identify its manifold interesting features.

I cannot bring this chapter to a close without emphasizing one important fact. All Persian weavers are artists in varying degree. The cultured weaver is no greater artist at his level than is the nomad at his. In every classification there are poor rugs and there are masterpieces. One need not be an expert to know what rug appeals to his own taste. I have been asked very often how an amateur may tell whether a rug is a masterpiece or a poor specimen. My reply is that an amateur cannot tell. He can only use his own judgment and whatever scraps of information he may possess. In the following pages I shall discuss rugs of the nomadic weavers in greater detail, and go on with a discussion of rugs in the other groups. I shall describe most of the better known rugs by name to help you to learn their distinguishing features. But for now it is sufficient to say that no one rug name is superior in itself to any other. In every type there are good rugs and poor ones, depending upon the particular weaver's ability to weave, and above all upon his taste for using design and color harmoniously. It is the unusual ability of so many of these weavers that makes Oriental rugs in general things of beauty and joys to live with day after day.

Tomb of King Darius (Fifth Century B.C.). At the upper right of the photograph is the tomb of the Achaemenian King Darius I (521-486 B.C.). The tomb is cut from solid rock in the mountain-side. Beneath the tomb is a Sassanian relief representing Bahram II (276-293 A.D.) in battle. At the lower left is a still later rock sculpture showing the Roman Emperor Valerian kneeling to King Shapur I.



## RUGS OF GEOMETRICAL DESIGN

In the limited pages of this book, it would be impossible for me to describe in detail every rug that is woven in Persia. I am trying, however, to give you a panoramic view of all the different types of rugs woven. To make the study easier I have broken down all the Persian rugs into three classifications determined by their patterns. I have touched lightly upon each of the three classifications: the geometric type, whose patterns are sharp and angular; the floral type, whose patterns are interlaced and minutely designed; and the conventionalized type, whose patterns are made up of separate designs, related in their arrangement but not connected.

Now I want to tell you a little more about the geometric family of rugs. These are rugs that belong to the nomadic culture. They are the product of the most primitive class of Persians, and the small countries adjoining Persia. They are chiefly tribes who live in the Caucasus, in Belouchistan, in Afghanistan, near Shiraz and Isfahan. All these people, since time primeval, have been



*Qashqai Kilim (Persian)*

*Size 5 x 8.8*

*Circa 1920*

One of the finest expressions of primitive weaving. This was woven as a utility item to serve as a floor covering in a tent, to cover bedding or to be hung as a decoration inside a dismal tent. It is an exquisite composition of Central Asian and Caucasian color influence. Every bar is an independent picture in itself, yet they are so arranged that they all blend together. Since Qashqais are Turkic-speaking people of Central Asian origin, they still retain some of the bold migratory traits in their weaving.





*Turkoman*

*Size 5.2 x 7.7*

*Dated 1888*

Although woven by Salor tribespeople in the vicinity of Ashkabad in Central Asia, the rug was apparently designed by, and its weaving overseen by, an Armenian master-weaver. Recently owned by an Armenian family in Istanbul, the rug when I purchased it had the inscription in its border totally dyed black. The presence of an Armenian inscription was an embarrassment and could have given the Turks reason to confiscate it at some point in the past. The inscription reads, *Badganoom Mira Sarookhaniantz 1888*, which translates "The absolute property of the Scribe Sarookhanian." The weave is classically fine and Turkoman, but the colors show Armenian taste in the use of red-orange with the plum-blue. Fineness, condition, and the Armenian inscription make it a most important rarity.

dependent upon their sheep for their livelihood. Since vegetation is scarce and uncertain in these parts, the nomads have always had to go seeking green pastures for their sheep. Their existence has been a wandering one.

When I think of rugs that embody all the characteristic traits of nomadic weaving, I turn first to the Caucasus, and especially to Kazak rugs. (See pp. 70, 92, 106, 125.) This type has been more plentiful in the older homes of Boston and other Atlantic seaboard towns than any other one kind. Kazaks were first brought to this country by the Yankee traders who had an eye for anything that was beautiful and enduring in value.

The Kazaks who weave these rugs are bold and restless people. They choose colors that are primary and sharp, and designs that are angular and strictly geometrical. Often the rugs are somewhat crooked in shape when they are completed, but they express the lively spirit of their weavers. Being artists at heart, these Kazak weavers turn mistakes into artistic creations. It is in their unspoiled simplicity that the charm and beauty of these rugs lie.

Although all Kazak rugs are woven by different people at different times, all have strong tribal characteristics in common. If you happen to be fortunate enough to own one yourself, look at it now, and see how much of the short description I am going to give of a typical Kazak applies to your rug.

First of all, it is a scatter-size rug. It is all wool—warp, weft, nap, and fringe. It is probably somewhat irregular in shape. In texture it is fairly thick. The design is either a series of three roughly even medallions, or three, with the central one larger and the end ones somewhat smaller. The field coloring is generally a warm, deep red, occasionally ivory. The medallions are of varying colors, depending upon the weaver's fancy. Sometimes the central medallion





*Qashqai Rug*

*Size 3 x 4.9*

A colorful example of nomadic weaving still practiced to this day by weavers in the vicinity of Shiraz.

is different, the two end ones alike. The Kazak's favorite choice of coloring is ivory, blue, and green in the medallions, with a main border usually of ivory, and two accompanying bands of either red or green. Almost all the designs are outlined in chestnut brown, a color which always wears down to the warp threads long before the other colors show wear. Wherever this color appears on your rug, you can feel with your finger the way it has worn down deep into the nap. The weaver knew that this would happen and used the color in such a way that his designs would achieve an embossed effect.

Two other well-known names in the Caucasian family are the Cabistan and the Shirvan. Sometimes Caucasian rugs are called Daghestans which means in Persian "The Mountainous Country" or the Caucasus. Cabistan rugs are usually very lovely and are considered very choice. If you have one, look at it now as I tell you some interesting facts about it. (See pp. 122, 160, 165, 167, 168.) Like the Kazak, it is all wool and of scatter-size. A common size is  $3\frac{1}{2}$  by 5 feet.

The pattern is sometimes a series of medallions. Sometimes the Cabistan weaver uses small diamond-shaped motifs to fill the field of the rug. The texture of the rug is light and rather fine. It is the finest rug woven in the Caucasus. These weavers show decided preference for the natural sheep's wool, so that their rugs are much lighter in general coloring effect. Soft shades of blues and reds are almost always used in combination with the natural ivory.

Another rug of importance in this nomadic group is the Shirvan. It is very similar in its details to the Cabistan except that it is loosely woven and uses shades of lavender and brown that are not to be found in Cabistans. Cabistan rugs are almost always oblong in shape, while Shirvans tend to be almost square.

The Kazak, the Cabistan, and the Shirvan are perhaps the best-known rugs

*Joshegan-Khosrovabad*

*Size 8.9 x 11.6*

*Contemporary*

The village of Joshegan, built in the hills north-east of Isfahan, is the home of village weaving of the finest quality. Weave is close and fine, similar to that of Isfahan rugs, while the traditional "snowflake" pattern of diamond-shaped floral motifs is worked in clear tones of cherry red, blue, gold and green that opalesce in the light. The arrangement of the pattern in this rug shows depth of imagination and insight. The choice and blending of colors give the rug an abiding freshness and beauty.





Bags or *juvals* similar to this Shiraz weaving are used to store or transport goods or provisions.

which come from the Caucasus. There are others like the Chichi Cabistan and the Derebend (See p. 160), but they bear strong family resemblances to those we have described.

When we come to the rugs that are the products of the nomads in Persia, we touch upon another strain of nomads, whose culture and influences have been very different from those in the Caucasus. For instance, the weavers of Shiraz rugs are almost all nomads from different tribes and families who identify themselves with the city of Shiraz, famous for its poetry, wine, and nightingales. They are nomadic in their outlook and in their expression, but the bold angularity of typical nomadic expression is somewhat tempered by local culture and environment. In their wanderings they have met other types of Persian culture and seen ways different from their own. All this influence of other cultures shows in their rugs. If you have a Shiraz rug, examine it. Its design is geometrical but not as sharp as a Kazak in either color or pattern. It has a soothing mellowness that is excelled by few other Persian rugs. The sheer simplicity and primitive beauty of Shiraz rugs are the spontaneous creation of people who are free mentally and spiritually.

Since there are so many tribes of weavers in the Shiraz family, it is very difficult to find one typical rug. It may pretty safely be said that most Shiraz rugs are of scatter size. Usually a series of three medallions makes up the central motif. Then the inside field may be covered with various small figures (See p. 9). Sometimes the field is intermingled with eight-pointed stars. Shiraz weavers are fond of depicting roosters in their rugs. Again the whole rug may be divided into larger diamonds, each of a different interesting shade.

There is one almost infallible way of identifying a Shiraz rug, for these



weavers almost always overcast the rug edges with multicolored yarn. Usually these rugs have a short selvedge on both ends. Shiraz rugs are very soft and can easily be crumpled up. Like all nomadic work, these rugs are all wool.

Weavers of Shiraz are partial to cobalt blues inside their medallions or in the inside corners of their rugs. They also use various shadings of brick reds, and in true nomadic style, considerable ivory. A very typical size is 5 by 6 feet.

One of the greatest and perhaps the most versatile of the nomadic tribes of Persian weavers, are the Bachtiaris, who inhabit the southern half of Persia. Bachtiri in Persian means "The Lucky Ones." There is a long Persian legend which makes them out to be the picked of all the Iranian stock. They are a tall, handsome, sturdy race of people. Like other nomads they have their own codes and system of government. They keep entirely to themselves, completely excluding all outsiders. Therefore their art and culture generally, and their rug weaving specifically, are definite and unique.

Luckily for the novice, their rugs have certain unusual and characteristic features. Almost all Bachtiri rugs, large or small, are divided into distinctive pattern blocks, each a separate picture (See p. 129). Yet they have the boldness which is typical of all nomadic rugs. It is interesting to note that these nomads are extremely fond of yellows and many shades of green, which are seen so little in Persian rugs generally. Bachtiri rugs usually have a cotton warp. There is enough stability in their lives so that they are able to raise a little cotton. Almost all the Bachtiri tribes are identified with some village or town where they make their headquarters. Here the older members of the family stay to cultivate grain, tend orchards, and maintain headquarters, while the younger and stronger members follow the sheep.



*Bachtiri (Armeni-Baft) Rug*

*Size 4.10 x 10.6*

A delightful blend of Caucasian and Bachtiri spirit. This rug was woven by Armenian villagers who live in New Julfa, just south of Isfahan.



The saddle cover for a Tekke Turkoman chieftan's horse. It is extremely fine in every detail.

One of the best known nomadic groups of Turkish descent is the Qash-gais who live and control the grazing grounds north of Shiraz. They produce some of the finest nomadic rugs in Persia. The rugs are strongly influenced by Shiraz and Bachtiani weaving. They are typically nomadic in spirit, generally woven in scatter sizes. They use a special shade of green described locally as "cucumber green."

Another interesting group in the nomadic culture includes weavers of many types of Boukara rugs—the Yomud, the Afghan, the Khatchli, the Khiva, the Tekke, and others. The outstanding features of the Boukaras are their octagonal patterns and their distinctive red coloring. Almost all Boukara weavers make use of the octagon-shaped motif for their main pattern (See pp. 182, 189, 190). This octagon is larger or smaller, depending upon the tribe that weaves it. For example, the weavers of Afghan and Khiva have always made fairly sizable octagons, sometimes about a foot square in their room size rugs, smaller in their smaller rugs. The weavers of Tekke and Yomud Boukaras will make their motifs about half the size, but whatever the size, the design is fundamentally the same. The intensity of their red coloring depends somewhat upon the weaver's potluck in dyeing, literally. Apparently this deep, warm coloring must have been a source of satisfaction to them, supplying some of the warmth and cheer that they lack in their bare and humble surroundings. Those of you who own the so-called Princess, or Royal Boukaras would be disappointed if no mention were made of them. These Boukaras are referred to in this country as rugs of the finest Boukara workmanship and artistic beauty. They are usually of the Tekke Boukara family. I am quite confident that the adjectives implying regal qualities for these rugs are products of American salesmanship, designed to glamorize them.

*Saraband (Persian)*

*Size 4.6 x 7.1*

*Circa 1900*

This is a classic Saraband rug woven in the vicinity of Sultanabad. This design is known to the rug trade as "Saraband" although in the Azerbaijan it is called "Naksh-i badam" or "almond nut design." In other parts of Persia it is called the "boteh" or "branch" pattern. Rug weavers everywhere in Persia use it to some extent but it is most popular in the Azerbaijan. Early rug weavers on the Caspian Sea coast also have used this pattern freely in their weaving. Some of the early weavers in Sivas and Kayseri, in Turkey, also have made occasional use of this design. Possibly the best and most colorful use of the pattern is in the silk saris of India. In this example the almond pattern is neatly arranged in alternating rows. The weaver has been successful in creating a wonderful sense of symmetry. But closer examination reveals that no two motifs are of the same size. The pattern in the large ivory border is again typical of this pattern. It gives the effect of grapes hanging from a twisting, meandering vine, but in reality it is another use of the Saraband motif, elongated and decorated to fit the space available. This rug has a soft patina from age.





Almost all nomadic weavers, whether from the Caucasus, Afghanistan, Shiraz or the Bachtuari tribes, have little besides their patched-up, black goat's-hair tent, which is their home during wanderings, and their flocks of sheep which represent immense wealth, and whose need for grass determines their way of life. Today as in generations past, they are following the sheep which supply all their needs. On hoof before them, over age-old routes, go their food, the source of their clothing, and all the wool for the vast numbers of rugs they miraculously find time to weave.

This young girl was among a group of weavers in Hamadan. I asked her if she spoke Turkish. She was almost speechless with surprise that someone from America could speak to her in her own local dialect. "Why, I *am* Turkish!" she replied.



*Luristan (Persian)*

*Size 4.4 x 7.6*

*19th Century*

Luristan is a mountainous province situated in the western region of Persia. Most of the people living there are either shepherds or farmers. Today very few rugs are woven here. This rug is a fine example showing the basic traits of the Lures. It is simple, bold and geometrical in shades of blue with accents of coral reds, ivories and some greens. The weavers do all the spinning and dyeing. The rugs are always all wool, warp and weft. The weavers have perpetuated their own taste and have remained remarkably original to this day. It is significant that the ancestors of these people in the 12th century made bronzes that are found in most museums of any importance.





*Tabriz Hunting Rug (Persian)*

*Size 4.6 x 6.7*

*19th Century*

This is an unusual example of Tabriz weaving. The design is delicately drawn and the colors beautifully blended, with many subtle variations. The weaver has been more painstaking than most Tabriz weavers, yet upon close scrutiny one discovers many of the same discrepancies and irregularities that characterize less sophisticated weaving. Notice the fine miniature-like tracery of design and the beautiful clarity and rhythm of the line. There is lively action in the scene. The *jangal* (jungle or forest) scene is indicated by the few graceful, pleasantly proportioned trees, and the many flowers. This rug tells no particular story, but has a lyric quality.

## RUGS OF FLORAL DESIGN

We have seen what interesting rugs are made by the nomadic families of the Caucasus, Afghanistan, Shiraz, the Qashqai, and the Bactiari. As we have noted, these are rugs that are geometrical in design, sharp and bold in coloring. Their beauty lies not in their intricate and detailed craftsmanship, but in their primitive and unspoiled simplicity.

Now let us turn to the rugs of the floral family (See pp. 21, 42, 44, 48, 51, 79, 87, etc.), whose patterns are minutely worked out with a marvelous variety of carefully blended color shades. At a casual glance they seem almost machine-perfect, and have a tone of symmetry. Their detail and precision of weaving comes from the fact that the weavers of floral rugs are the most highly cultured of all weavers of Oriental rugs. They live in well-established towns and cities of importance, of which there are not too many in Persia.

These weavers are of the same racial stock as those who roam the countryside in search of green grass for their flocks, but theirs is a much more highly developed





*Tabriz Prayer - Silk (Persian)*

*Size 4 x 5.3*

*19th Century*

A rare example of Tabriz weaving. The red field is much richer than one would expect to find in this area, although it is of henna origin. The light blue, softened with time, is indigenous to this area and is sometimes called "Tabriz Blue." A large decorative tree is used for the rug's central motif. The extended branches turn and twist to gracefully decorate the field. On either side of the tree stands a large candlestick. The design is clearly defined and with every changing light the whole rug opalesces like a large jewel.

culture, and a much more stable civilization. They have developed the primitive skill of the nomads as their general level of culture advanced. Today their technical skill surpasses the workmanship of any other rug-makers anywhere in the world. Their rugs are usually large, sometimes of palace size. The planning and execution of such rugs reflect their settled existence and their well-ordered thinking. In order to make rugs of such tremendous proportions, they must have a vast accumulation of material, adequate space to set up a mammoth loom, patience to work perhaps for a lifetime with the certainty that if the rug is not completed, others will carry it on to completion. Quite a contrast with the nomad who remains in one place only while the grass is green there.

The leading rugs of floral design are the Kirman, the Keshan, the Kazvin, the Meshed, the Tabriz, the Isfahan, the Nain, the Qum, and the Sarouk. Almost all these names are names of leading Persian cities, which at one time or another during the country's long and colorful past were capital cities. Their glory waxed and waned with the rise and fall of successive dynasties. When a new ruler came to power, he chose whatever city suited his fancy as his capital. Then by force or persuasion he brought to his capital from the surrounding countries the leading artists in manuscript illumination, metal craft, or rug making. Since Persian history covers so many centuries and includes so many rulers, every great city literally had its day at court. It is easy to see how the cultural life of these different cities was enriched by this process. So if we wonder today how some humble weaver of Tabriz or Isfahan can weave his majestic, jewel-like rug, we might do well to remember that, for all we know, he may be the direct descendant of some ancient craftsman whose fame once won him royal favor and patronage. The tradition of his work lives on today.



One of the best examples of a floral-type rug is the Kirman (See pp. 56, 87, 115). Let me say, before I go any further, that there is a sharp distinction between a Kirman and a Kirmanshah rug. When Kirman rugs were first brought into the country, and indeed up until very recently, they were sold as Kirmanshah rugs. Perhaps Kirmanshah sounded more Oriental to the early traders. There is such a city, but we have only a few rugs from there in this country and they are sold as Kurd or Kurdistan rugs, and have no characteristics in common with Kirman rugs. If you own a so-called Kirmanshah rug that is strictly floral in design, you may be perfectly sure that it is really a Kirman. The chief colors are ivory, rose, soft pinks, soft greens, and soft blues. Kirman rugs are usually woven with a central medallion which as a rule is worked out in exquisite detail, so that it stands out like a jewel against the field of the rug. The field color is usually ivory, blue, or rose, occasionally green. It is characteristic of many Kirman rugs to have an impressively plain field with a garland-like border. Others will be woven with a large tree of life pattern, or with a design of tiny little vases of flowers, or little individual garlands repeated over and over again. Whatever the design, the coloring is always soft and light.

Keshans (See pp. 10, 21) are finely woven, like the Kirmans. They almost always have a central medallion with a main field coloring of henna-rose or, less commonly, dark blue. The field is usually covered with meandering roses which emanate from the corners of the rug and turn and twist until the field is filled, but not crowded, creating a lovely balance and a soothing beauty. Keshans are fairly thin in texture, and are highly prized by the Persians. Some of the most beautiful silk rugs in existence are from the looms of Keshan.

Kazvin rugs, at a glance, resemble Keshans very closely, but more careful

*Don Kazak Prayer (Caucasian)*

*Size 5.4 x 7.1*

*Circa 1800*

This rare Kazak is a striking find from the upper region of the Caucasus. It is an impressive treatment of simple geometric design, using everyday items such as combs and barnyard animals to enliven the severity. This design has special relevance to the ancient art of the weaver. Two millennia B.C. potters were using similar patterns. Despite the vagaries of individual expression, the thread of tradition carries on unbroken to rug-weaving peoples today. The large central medallion is divided into sections with an octagonal form at the bottom and a triangular prayer point at the top. The weaver wanted to give identity to the prayer point by weaving two hands where the devout owner would place his own hands while praying. On either side are rake-like designs which are combs, symbolic of cleanliness. The ewer between the hands is a reminder of the washing ritual before prayer. The lemon yellow in the main border glows in contrast to the terracotta field. The midnight blue gives the rug a sharp, bold quality.





*Isfahan (Persian)*

*Size 4.10 x 7.2*

*Contemporary*

A contemporary Isfahan of rare quality and design, as finely woven as any made in this area over the past few centuries. The classic Isfahan pattern is woven in tones of soft red, blues and ivory. The pile is fine, close and densely knotted. Almost all the weaving in Isfahan is intricately floral in pattern. Similar motifs appear on Isfahan copper, tile and miniatures all of which enjoy an international reputation. The wool which is unusually durable is obtained from Bachtuari shepherds. The dyes are largely vegetable derivatives, most of the dyeing being done in a nearby town, Nejafabad.



examination reveals that they are heavier and firmer in texture. The colors are much the same except that more henna-rose is used.

Nain rugs are perhaps the finest rugs woven in Persia. They are highly prized by the Persians who generally consider ownership of Nain rugs as synonymous with wealth and good taste. Consequently, they are the most expensive of any Persian rugs. Nains are woven with equal dexterity in either wool or silk. It is quite common to find the rug woven of wool with the tiny designs outlined in silk. This contrast of material intensifies the pattern giving it a miniature-like quality.

The weavers of Meshed are perhaps the most gifted and versatile of all the Persian rug weavers. Their cultural horizon is constantly widened by contact with the pilgrims who pour into Meshed from all parts of Persia, making pilgrimages to the shrines of the holy Imams or saints of the pious Persian Muslims. To make such a pilgrimage is costly so that usually only the well-to-do can afford to attempt it while others spend a lifetime saving for this important experience. With him the pilgrim takes the best that he can possibly offer at these shrines. A Persian who has made this trip and gone through the ritual will henceforth be known as *Meshedi* by all who know him. While in Meshed he contributes to the wealth, the arts, and the learning of the city. This has been going on for so many centuries that Meshed has become the Mecca of the Persians.

The rugs woven in Meshed have a jewel-like quality resembling the domes and minarets of mosques. Their medallions are like stained glass windows, set in a field usually of cathedral red and surrounded by a series of borders. Incidentally, Meshed rugs have the reputation in Persia of having the greatest



Isfahan's famous *Maidan*, or square. Here polo games were played when the city was the capital of Shah Abbas.

number of borders of any Persian rug. This fact does not make these rugs either inferior or superior, it is simply an interesting feature. Because of their cathedral reds and rich cobalt blues, Meshed rugs sometimes at a quick glance seem to have a purplish cast.

Another interesting family of rugs in the floral group comes from Tabriz. Situated in the northwestern part of Persia, Tabriz has experienced the influx of Mongolian hordes who have contributed to the diversity of designs and colors in Tabriz weaving. Often Tabriz rugs are as beautifully woven and as minute in detail as any floral rug. Again, another family of Tabriz weavers, using the same technique, will choose a design which to the casual observer may seem quite foreign to Tabriz. Perhaps the rug may have a conventionalized type of design like the Herati or Fereghan motif (See p. 103). Further examination reveals that the workmanship is that of the polished, creative artist. Sometimes a Tabriz rug may have the appearance of a Kirman, a Keshan, or a Meshed, yet its workmanship is characteristically that of a Tabriz. Only one who knows the technicalities of knot tying and the distinguishing qualities of wool can identify these rugs accurately. Tabriz weavers are especially fond of a certain shade of blue known as "Tabriz blue." There stands in Tabriz a partially ruined mosque known throughout the East as the "Blue Mosque of Tabriz." The tiles are of the same shade of blue that is used in these rugs. Tabriz rugs are very soothing to the eye.

There is an old Persian saying that, "Half the world is Isfahan." This means to the Persians that you have not seen half the world until you have seen Isfahan with all its beauties and artistic accomplishments. (See pp. 49, 117.) Isfahan was the capital city of one of Persia's greatest rulers, Shah Abbas, contemporary

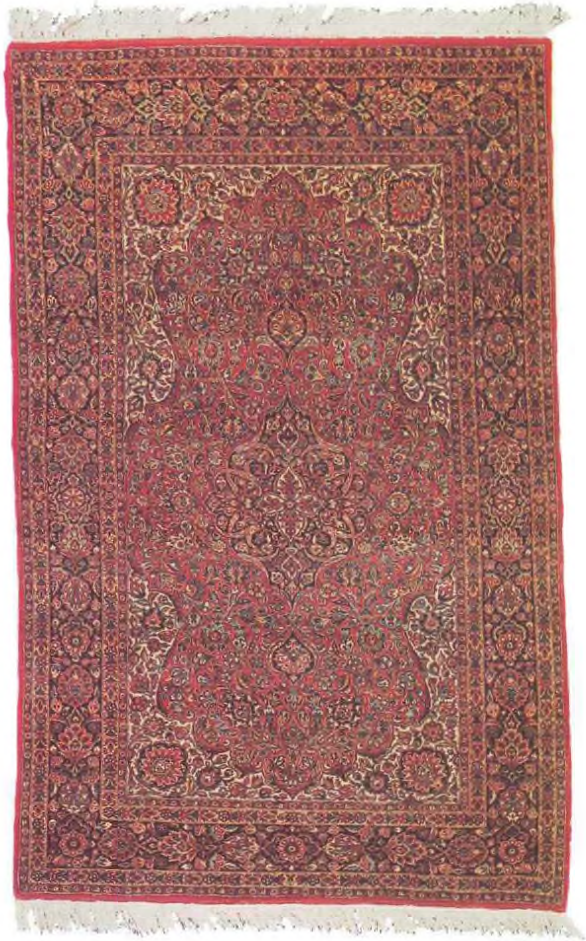


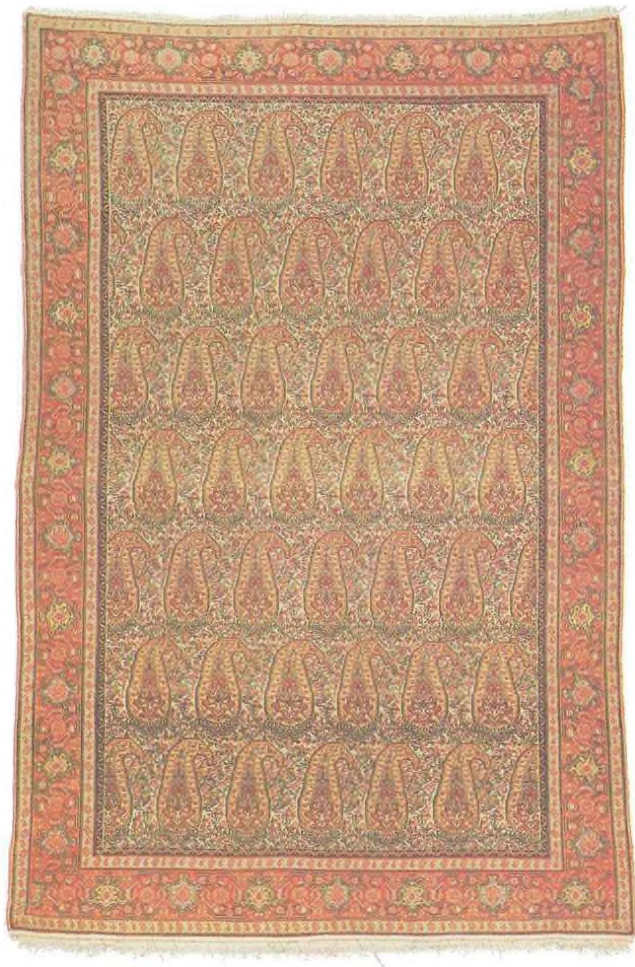
*Kazvin (Persian)*

*Size 5 x 8*

*Circa 1900*

This classic rug was woven in the city of Kazvin. Since World War II, rug weaving in Kazvin has come to a complete standstill. However, rugs of similar types have been made in Hamadan, where labor and materials were plentiful. These rugs, labelled *Ecbatana*, although of fine quality, cannot be compared to the original Kazvins. As of this writing, early in 1977, they are no longer being woven in Hamadan. The workmanship of the traditional Kazvin is equal to the very best rugs woven in Persia. The weaving is fine, the texture firm and heavy. The graceful floral pattern is well detailed, beginning from a single rose bush at either end of the rug, turning and twisting to interlace in ribbon-like tendrils about the central medallion. The rich, pearl-white corner decorations are scalloped in shape to give the central motif a double prayer rug effect. The Shirley brothers who brought back such rugs from Persia to the court of Queen Elizabeth I were the first to introduce these rugs to Europe.





*Senna (Kurdish)*

*Size 3 x 5*

*Circa 1800*

One of the finest rugs that has ever come from Kurdistan. Although it is woven with wool it feels and looks like a silk rug. The design used is the famous Azerbaijan *nakshi-badam* or almond-nut design. It is much used by Persian weavers and by weavers in the Caucasus bordering on the Caspian Sea. Girls and housewives are fond of using it in their embroidery or *suzanni* (needlework). Imaginative artists use the simple *badam* in creative ways as does the weaver of this rug, where the designs seem to resemble birds picking at twigs. The field is closely covered with branches, buds and leaves giving the entire rug an outdoor effect.

of Queen Elizabeth. Today, rugs which are truly the work of native weavers of Isfahan are rare. Untold numbers of so-called Isfahan rugs are sold in this country, but they do not embody the traditional traits of design and workmanship. A typical Isfahan rug is exquisitely fine, strictly floral in design with a lovely deep red or ivory field, and an extremely low nap.

When Shah Abbas determined to make Isfahan his capital, he wanted it to be the artistic and cultural center of his empire. He commissioned craftsmen from everywhere to come to work on his capital. Of particular significance, he brought from Julfa in Armenia, bordering Persia, several thousand Armenian families who were especially gifted and proven craftsmen. The Armenians were given special lands outside Isfahan, across the Zenda Rud River where they built themselves a community which is called to this day New Julfa, reminiscent of the city from which they came. They have prospered under all subsequent rulers of Persia who have recognized their freedom and special privileges. They have contributed much to Isfahan's magnificence. Now these Armenians are jewelry makers, miniature painters, weavers and similar artisans. However, their weaving has taken on the appearance and quality of Bachtari rugs which are known in Persia as *Armeni-baft* rugs, meaning that they are woven by Armenians.

Traditional Sarouk rugs are extremely fine, using either a well-detailed floral pattern (See p. 115) or an exquisitely designed small Saraband pattern (See p. 39). The wool from Sarouk has unusual natural luster. When these weavers choose to make a rug with a Saraband pattern they usually plan a series of multiple borders which in themselves are as beautiful as the body of the rug. The small, detailed Saraband pattern is woven in delightful shades of



A traditional Sarouk rug of the nineteenth century. It is almost threadbare, but the colors and design are still sharp and clear.



ivory, gold, coral, dark blue and occasionally green. The floral pattern is woven with a medallion on a field of deep rose or ivory.

Summing up the floral group, one must remember that they are all rugs whose designs are soft, flowing, interwoven patterns. Almost all our very large rugs are from the floral families. Almost all these rugs have cotton warp and weft threads, but like all Orientals, the nap is all wool. There are a few other names in this group which I have not discussed, but I would like to mention them. They are Sultanabads, Mahals, Joshagans (See p. 35), Khorasans, Lillihans, Dergazines, Genj-teppes, Kaputrangs, Borchalous, and some Bidjar rugs.

The comfort and pleasure which one derives from living with an Oriental rug is not dependent upon the type of Oriental rug that it may chance to be. I have said before and I say again, that one may find as much pleasure in a simple, primitive rug as in a fine, intricate one. For each is complete in itself, like a painting, and is not to be compared with any other rug. From a technical point of view, however, rugs of the floral classification which I have been discussing are never excelled in fine workmanship. Today, as in centuries past, they continue to adorn palaces, cultured homes, and even isolated tents pitched in some far-away desolate country-side.





Rugs being washed at Chasm Ali at Rayy. The water is clear and cold, bubbling out from under the mountain.

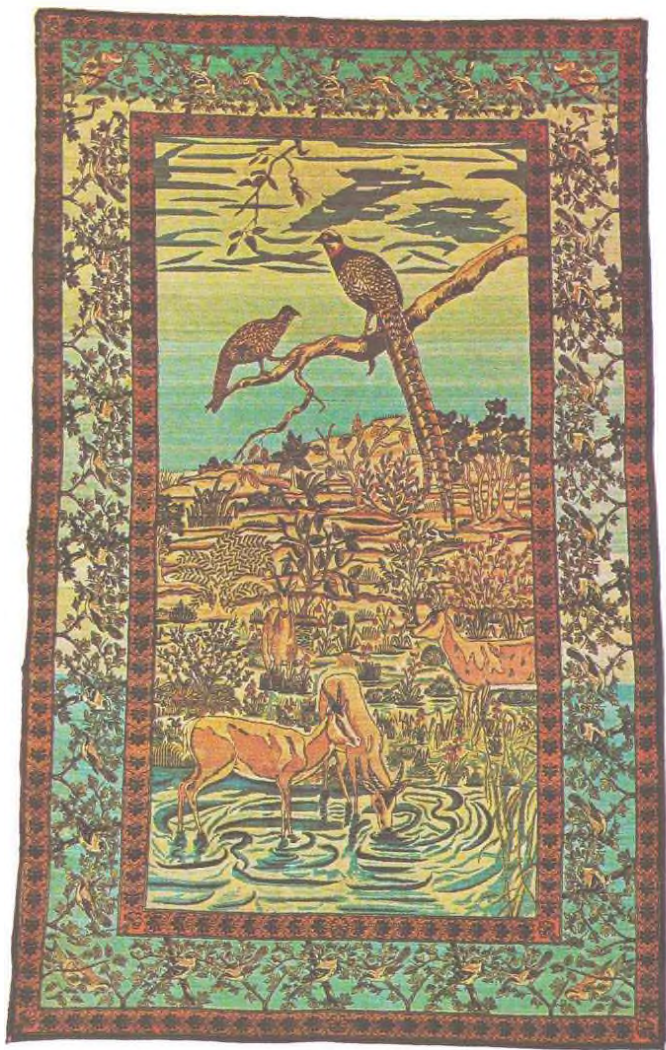
Freshly washed rugs spread out on the mountainside in the hot sun to dry.



Rugs being washed at Rayy.

A father and son washing rugs in a brook in the suburbs of Shiraz. They use their feet as agitators.





*Kirman Rug (Persian)*

*Size 5 x 7.6*

*19th Century*

A masterpiece of Kirman craftsmanship. Some obscure weaver has tied more than a half million knots to bring this rug to completion. The detail is sharp and clear. The colors are soft and beautifully blended. Apparently this skilled craftsman faced the same problems as most weavers do when all the wool is not dyed in one lot. The light blue yarn he was using had to be replenished more than ten times. Each new dye lot gave him a different shade of blue. But who was he, a simple weaver, to question destiny or *kismet*? In his last dye lot he was most successful in achieving a deep blue. The treatment of the landscape, the gazelles, and the pheasants is delightfully imaginative.

## RUGS OF CONVENTIONALIZED DESIGN

I have already stated that we can classify Persian rugs according to their designs in order to discuss and understand them more easily. I have tried to show you how these different types of design are the natural expression at different cultural levels of people who weave rugs. Rugs with geometric and with floral patterns I have already discussed in some detail. Now I would like to try to interpret for you the third important group of Persian rugs, those whose designs I have called conventionalized.

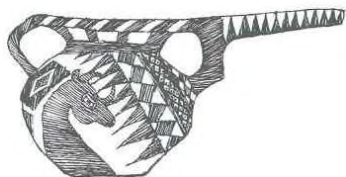
The rugs which fall in this category are made by people who live in untold numbers of little hamlets and villages scattered throughout Persia. Perhaps the greatest number are in Azerbaijan Province and in the vicinity of Hamadan. The people of these villages are above the nomadic level in their degree of culture, yet they do not have the education nor the breadth of vision to think out designs that are too complex. They seem to fall in between the very primitive and the quite complex civilizations which we have already discussed.



In the villages where they live there are usually not more than two hundred houses. (See p. 59) They are built close together, with walls in common for greater protection. The family lives in one large room, eating there, sleeping there, baking, and entertaining friends there. All summer long they work in their fields, growing and gathering in the crops which will provide their food for the long winter months when they will be shut off from the outside world. They have no time for weaving in the busy summer months; but during the long, cold winter they take up this indoor work, making use of all the daylight hours and working on for a few more hours by their sputtering castor-oil lamps.

All archeological excavations unearth untold numbers of castor oil lamps which are invariably described merely as "spouted vessels" even by native archeologists. I remember as a child that all the village people depended for their indoor lighting on these lamps. They were a crude, simple device for holding castor oil in which was laid a wick which extended to the spout where it was lighted. Because the oil was heavy, containing impurities and some water, and the supply was not uniform, the flame sputtered continually. Forty years later when I returned to my own village I did not find a single one of these lamps. Instead there were kerosene lamps which when lit not only gave much more steady light but also heated a coil which generated enough electricity to run a transistorized radio, available in the local bazaar. In the span of one generation the coming of the twentieth century has obliterated the memory, even the recognition, of the simple device which from prehistoric times was the only source of illumination for village homes.

Materially these people, of course, are very poor. What we consider here absolute necessities, would seem to them goods out of fairyland. And yet these



Ancient castor oil lamp.



same people have the vision and the patience to weave on and on, creating masterpieces of beauty without any expectation, usually, of great material compensation for their work. Apparently these people, like their brother weavers among the nomads or among the highly civilized city folks, have the same love of the beautiful which is inherent in all their race.

In general the weavers of rugs with conventionalized designs are particularly fond of patterns which are simple, not too realistic, but which create a pleasing design. They work with the special motifs they are fond of, repeating them over and over again in such an easy manner that when the rug is completed, it has a rhythm of its own. This repetition is the basic characteristic of their rugs. They achieve their beautiful effects by repeating figures which are related to each other, as those in geometric weaving are not. Yet these conventionalized designs are not connected and interwoven as are the patterns in floral weaving. At first glance these conventionalized rugs may seem, as the floral ones often do, beautifully uniform and balanced. But closer examination again reveals that here, as in all Oriental rugs, no two patterns are ever the same identical size or shape. This weaver, too, is working free-hand, not according to a definite blueprint, and his individuality shows in his work, making it alive, vibrant, most appealing.

The most important rug names in this conventionalized group are the Saraband, the Enjelus, the Fereghan, the Herati, the Kandahar, the Senna, the Hamadan, the Serab, the Bibikebad, and some of the Bidjar rugs.

Saraband rugs are known for their characteristic little summer-squash shaped designs which are often erroneously referred to as the "palm-leaf" pattern. In Persia this design is called the *badam* (See pp. 39, 52) or almond nut. This is so universally used in Paisley shawls, Indian block prints, and many of our machine-



This small village is typical of over forty-thousand similar villages in Iran. The small houses are of sun-dried brick.



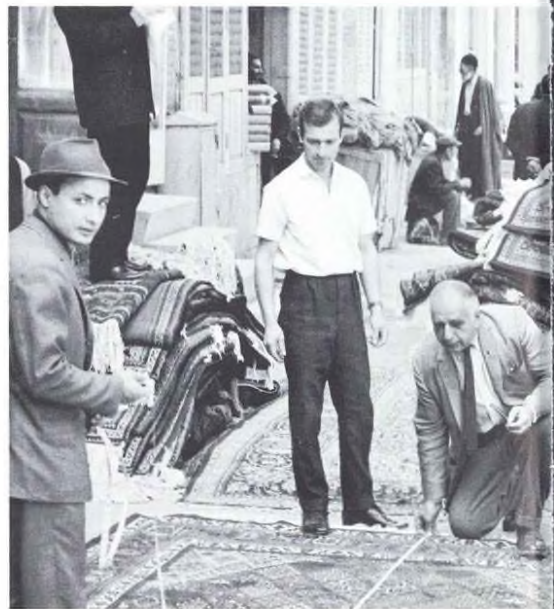
The main entrance to Sabzi Bazaar, the famous covered bazaar of Tehran. From early morning until late at night thousands of buyers, sellers, entrepreneurs, and sightseers jam into the labyrinth of streets, alleys, and shops. One's sense of direction is sorely tested unless he is a native or has a guide.



A young weaver doing minor repairs on the edges of antique rugs purchased by the author in the Tehran Bazaar.



With his beautiful Ardebil rug over his shoulder and his "worry" beads clasped tightly in his right hand, this seller was determined that he would make a sale. I bought his rug—and his "worry" beads as well!



A painted ice cream cart in the open bazaar at New Julfa, the Armenian town across the Zenda Rud River from Isfahan. The decoration of their own homes, their own Armenian Church, and even the pushcarts in the street is completely unlike the work these craftsmen did for their Persian masters in helping to build the great capital city of Isfahan.



Here is one of the faithful *hamals* or porters who watches the bargaining process like a hawk. As soon as he senses that the buyer and seller have reached an agreement, and the final glass of tea has been served, he starts rolling up the rugs.

A section of the rug bazaar in the Teheran covered bazaar. After days of selecting individual rugs from the hundreds of rug shops, large and small, within the tremendous complex of the Teheran bazaar, the rugs are collected in this courtyard. Here they are checked, measured, listed, and final prices determined. Then the rugs are taken away to be washed, given minor repairs, bailed, and sent to the port city of Khoramshar to be shipped to the United States.







An antique Senna rug with soft lime green field.

made prints that it has become synonymous with Oriental design to many of us. A characteristic Saraband rug has the whole field covered with a repetition of this design, sometimes with a little medallion in the center of the rug. The borders are ivory with a simple, meandering outline of a vine. Sarabands are firmly woven and short-napped. The red in a Saraband rug is quite different from most other oriental reds, having a sort of orange cast generally, or occasionally a rosy cast. Against this red background the little figures are worked out in blue, green, and ivory. When the rug has a dark blue background, the figures are in red, green, and ivory. The borders are almost always red and green. Although the Saraband pattern is quite often imitated by other weavers, genuine Sarabands are not very plentiful. Usually they are runners, occasionally oblong or room-size rugs. As a rule the warp threads are of cotton.

Enjelus rugs are much like Sarabands, but the workmanship is a bit finer. Like the weavers of Saraband, Enjelus weavers confine themselves mostly to runners, making occasional mats and room-size rugs.

Fereghan rugs generally reflect much the same spirit as Sarabands, but they use their own typical Fereghan or Herati pattern. This is a little rosette encircled by two curved designs sometimes described as leaves, sometimes as fishes. The background color of most Fereghans is dark blue, occasionally coral red, with the design worked out in red, green and ivory. A genuine Fereghan rug always has pistachio green for the field color of its main border. If the rug is worn at all, this color will be worn down to the warp threads. The motifs in the border are always turtle-shaped figures alternating with one of the rosette patterns from the field of the rug. Fereghans are usually very soft in texture, thin-napped and easy to crumple up. They are usually oblong in shape, with cotton warp.



Another famous rug in this classification is the Herati made in Afghanistan, in the ancient city of Herat. Herat was the capital of Khorasan after the Islamic conquest, and was destroyed by Jenghiz-Khan and Tamerlane. Ruins of mosques and other monuments tell of its ancient glories when it was the headquarters of Persian opulence, art and culture. The rugs made in Herat are very much like Fereghans in appearance, texture and design, except that they are finer, firmer, and make use of red in the border where Fereghan rugs use their characteristic pistachio green. Herati rugs are much larger than Fereghans, because Herat is an ancient city where life is arranged so that people of relative means have all their menial work performed by servants and they are free to undertake big, time-consuming tasks. Genuine Heratis are very scarce in this country.

Rugs made in Kandahar are exactly like the Heratis in color and design, but they are much heavier in texture and larger in size. About the turn of the century weavers of Kandahar were encouraged to weave rugs on a more commercial basis. Today, however, very few rugs come from Kandahar. Although Herat and Kandahar are not located in Persia now, but in Afghanistan, these two cities are both dominated by the culture of the past which was Persian.

Senna rugs were in greater abundance here at the close of the last century than they are today. Most of them were Senna kilims, fine, flat-woven pieces which are still adorning the walls, couches and tables in many older homes. Since they were too delicately woven and fragile to be used on the floor, they are still well preserved. Most of them are in small, scatter sizes. A typical Senna is extremely fine and very delicate in pattern. (See p. 52.) The designs are the same as those in Fereghan or Herati rugs, but they are not as perfectly executed. So much emphasis has been placed upon the conventionalizing of the

design that almost all resemblance to the original rose with its two encircling leaves or fishes has been lost. Unlike the weavers of Herat or Fereghan, Senna weavers are extremely fond of a large central medallion. Often they make the medallion so large that it overflows the field of the rug and seems to have its corners trimmed away to fit the space. Again they will treat their rugs like a delicately woven Paisley shawl, with little almond shaped designs repeated over and over again. Senna rugs are very thin in texture. They seem to the uninitiated a poor choice for wearing qualities and they are consequently quite scarce in this country.

Senna weavers are extremely fond of a very lovely light blue which is the same shade used by the weavers of Tabriz and Bidjar. They often make their medallions of this solid color, and repeat it in the corner pieces. Another favorite color is a rich red that has a tone of crimson, cleverly used to give the rug depth and warmth. The greatest number of Sennas are in scatter sizes, but they do make some large room-size rugs. The weavers of Senna are mostly Kurds with a generous intermixture of Persians and the descendants of the old Seljuks. Their history is rich and colorful like that of all the people in important towns along the main caravan route between Tabriz, Hamadan and Kirmanshah.

The name Hamadan covers many sins as far as rugs are concerned. It is a large rug-weaving center. Many types of rugs are woven in Hamadan and marketed under different names, while many hamlets and towns in the vicinity make rugs sold as Hamadans (See pp. 51, 108). Although these rugs have many characteristics in common because of their geographic proximity, each village has its own identifying features and characteristics. If each were to be called by its village name, rug names would be even more confusing than they are.

*Talish (Caucasian)*

*Size 3.7 x 7.4*

*18th Century*

A fine example showing the relationship between the best of Caucasian design and color and that of Chinese Turkestan. At a quick glance one would think that the rug had been woven in Chinese Turkestan because of its generous use of old blue and the orange-touched disc pattern in the border, so reminiscent of the old Khotan rugs. The delicate treatment of detail is typically Caucasian, however. More than a hundred years ago, the right-hand border was completely restored. Although the reweaving was done very well, time has aged these newer colors differently from the original.





*Tabriz Rug*

A Tabriz rug in the best Tabriz tradition. It has a jewel-like medallion on a rust red field. The field design is the famous Herati pattern, while that of the main border uses alternating turtles. With delightful accents of green, gold, and ivory, the rug takes on the appearance of a miniature painting.

Hamadan rugs as a rule are good, substantial, long-wearing rugs, most of them erring on the side of being rather ordinary. Now and then one may be quite usually nice, especially those that make use of natural camels' hair. Hamadan rugs use almost every pattern and color imaginable. They are not consistent, for these weavers are always searching for some unusual design to make their rugs more marketable. There is a spirit of commercialism in Hamadan that is not as prevalent in other rug-weaving towns. Hamadan has come to be quite a large export center for Persian rugs. Almost every large Oriental rug importer has a buyer stationed in Hamadan, consequently it has become a clearinghouse for almost all rugs made in Persia. Hamadan rugs are made in all sizes from mats to large room-size rugs, with runners the most common variety.

Many rugs today which are woven in Hamadan, are marketed as Kazvin rugs. This has been going on since the 1930's. Rug weaving in Kazvin is almost extinct.

The Serab (See p. 16) is a rug which is not well known in this country. This village lies on the main caravan route between Tabriz and Ardebil. It has long been famous for its rugs which are quite unlike most other Oriental rugs. Serabs are principally made as runners or as small scatter-size rugs. All are made of camels' hair, the natural hair the predominating color. Coral reds and turquoise green are also used, giving the rugs a soft jewel-like glow. Serabs are heavy rugs, with warp and weft threads of wool. They can easily be identified for they have a characteristic design which always appears in their borders. This is composed of a square made up of nine little dots or rosettes of color, three in each of three rows, alternating with a rosette which remotely resembles a turtle or crab.





*Shah Sevan Spoon Holder*

This is a rare item woven both for utility and as a bit of joyful decoration to hang inside the *yurt* or cylindrical tent. It is intended to hold wooden spoons. The lattice effect with tassels adds a charming note within the tent. This particular spoon-holder has two smaller bags on either side, where jewelry or other precious personal objects might be kept. Judging by the change of design, the smaller bag on the right hand side was probably woven by a different family member. The backs which we cannot see are also decoratively woven.

Bibikebad rugs come from the vicinity of Hamadan, but they are quite different in their texture. They are finely woven with unusually high nap, giving the rug a very substantial appearance. The design is usually like the Fereghan, except that the Bibikebad weavers use a large central medallion, with a smaller medallion inside the large one. The inside corner pieces of the rug match the medallion. Bibikebads have more borders than any other rug except the Meshed. These rugs make generous use of gold and green in their medallions. They are usually made in large room sizes, some extremely large, and only a few in scatter sizes. Typical field colors are dark blue or light henna-rose. These rugs are very popular because of their fine blending of colors and their conservative designs.

Bidjar rugs (See p. xviii) are made by two classes of weavers: those who remain in Bidjar all the time, and those who live in the little Kurdish villages surrounding the town. The rugs made in Bidjar itself generally fall in the floral category, but the great number of Bidjar rugs are really Kurd-Bidjars and are woven in much the same spirit as Senna and Fereghan. However, they are more firmly woven, heavier, and have a more substantial feeling, which is their chief feature distinguishing them from the Sennas and Fereghans. Some of our most charming rugs today are from this area. They have a fine reputation for wear, and are much in demand for their quality and beauty.

Rugs of the conventionalized class are perhaps the most comfortable of all Persian rugs to live with. They are basically plain in pattern and in color. They are unpretentious, and always conservative. Today as for many years past, conservative homes which have Oriental rugs have one or more of the conventionalized type.

*Bidjar (Kurdish)*

*Size 8.6 x 11.6*

*Contemporary*

Although the rugs of Bidjar tend to be somewhat bold and primitive in their workings of floral patterns, there are some like this example which rival the rugs of Sarouk and Keshan, differing principally in weave and colors chosen. This example employs an unusual combination of yellows and greens in addition to the more familiar terra-cotta. The wool, which is durable and resilient, is purchased from the migratory Afshari tribes who are mostly shepherds. The dyeing is done by a few families in Bidjar. Each family enjoys a reputation for a certain color, and is secretive of its process. This rug is an excellent example combining the best dyes from this area.





*Kirghiz Kazak*

*Size 5.8 x 6.10*

*19th Century*

An outstanding example of craftsmanship from the Turkic-speaking Kirghiz tribespeople of Central Asia. This was most likely woven by those Kirghiz who inhabit northern Kazakhstan. The wool is long, resilient and durable, similar to the wool from the Astrakhan sheep. The weaver unfortunately ran short of the beautiful turquoise-like green and the subsequent dye lots became much darker. Nevertheless it was used with no regrets. One can almost hear them say, *pis dayil*, it is not bad.



## HOW TO APPRAISE YOUR RUGS

There seems to be considerable uncertainty in the minds of many people regarding the good features to look for and the undesirable qualities to avoid in selecting Oriental rugs. Much has been written and said about choice masterpieces that hang in museums, but very little about such rugs as you and I have in our homes, and live with day in and day out. In this chapter I want to discuss various facts which might help you possess a tangible yardstick for appraising the rugs with which you and your friends live.

The thickness or thinness of a rug, the brightness or dullness of the colors, the obscurity or familiarity of the name, or even, in many cases, the number of knots to the square inch are no criteria in themselves for judging the quality of a rug. A rug, like a painting, is first of all a thing of beauty, and it should be viewed as such. Not every painting, of course, is a great work of art, and not every Oriental rug is a masterpiece. Keeping this fact in mind will help you give every rug a fair appraisal on its own merits, not according to its name or



This Keshan rug has deep blue in the field, with a generous amount of light and tile blue, gold, green and ivory. This rug is an example of contemporary weaving, employing the best of the weaver's talent and materials.

the rug family to which it belongs. You must remember that while a rug may be most fascinatingly woven, the choice of colors may be poor or jarring so that the rug is worthless as far as its artistic value is concerned. It is the artistic combination of workmanship, colors, and material which gives Oriental rugs generally a pre-eminent place in the arts.

Let us take, for instance, the Keshan rugs. They have a reputation for being extremely finely woven, and their weavers hold a high place among Oriental craftsmen. Some of our finest and choicest rugs are from this family. But of course this rule does not hold true in every case. Among the weavers of Keshan there are a limited number at any period whose workmanship is not on a level with other craftsmen of the same city. Then there is no reason why, just because two rugs are called Keshans, each should demand the same price or be equally beautiful. This same truth applies to rugs of every make in every category. Weavers are as versatile as the individuals in the human race. Although they have a tradition by which they work, a vision which is entirely Oriental, and a taste which in a great majority of cases shows a remarkable affinity to our own, yet each individual has his particular strength or frailty. It is the ability to appraise the good or bad, the artistic or inartistic, which marks the connoisseur of Oriental rugs.

Again let me emphasize that it is what you personally see in a rug, and like, the qualities with which you are particularly happy to live, which should be your first consideration. If a rug does not have this charm for you, then it is not the rug for you to live with. It may be extremely fine, and may have a history yards long, but you are not going to live with the back of the rug, nor with its history. If the rug really appeals to you, then you should consider its

*Yarkand Rug (Chinese Turkestan)*

*Size 7.2 x 13.9*

*18th Century*

A remarkable example of influences from many Eastern cultures combined in a single rug. The yellow field coloring and extreme outer border is of Chinese influence. The three central medallions are indigenous Turkoman concepts. The coral coloring of the medallions and the borders is of Mongolian influence. Coral is highly cherished by people of the steppes to this day. The small, stylized trees with blossoming branches are typically Persian and much used by Joshagan weavers. The potted plants in between the medallions are a Seljuk influence and are still used in Persia by Turkic-speaking Qashqais. All these motifs can be found in many present-day Turkish rugs as well as in those woven centuries ago. This is an excellent example with strong emphasis on the use of yellow and simplicity of pattern.





*Berjun (Persian)*

*Size 4.6 x 7.4*

*Circa 1900*

Berjun, a city of easternmost Persia, is the home of some classically designed rugs, in traditional floral or repeated motif patterns. This antique jewel glows with color. In Berjun, as in Kirman and Meshed, the red dyes are obtained from the cochinal worm. The reds in these rugs usually have a winery cast which with age, as in this rug, will soften and show variations. This is a striking example of open field design found in many rugs of the floral family such as Tabriz, Keshan, Sarouk, and Kerman.



physical and artistic merits. You should ask yourself, "Is it well made? Will it wear well? Is it representative of its type?" But these are secondary considerations. The first concern is the rug's charm-appeal for you.

The amateur or one who has been accustomed to living with rugs of stereotyped, machine regularity, may need to cultivate his taste and appreciation for certain aspects of Oriental rug craftsmanship. For instance, one may see a rug that is lovely, suits the particular need, and yet, disturbingly to the uninitiated, while there is a full crop of fringe on one end, on the other there is almost none. "Oh, dear," says the poor little woman who wants her rugs to be just exactly right, "I wish the rug had fringes on both ends." To her I say, her years of living with machine-made articles of cut-and-dried uniformity have left their mark upon her taste. When she has come to understand with her mind the reason behind this Oriental idiosyncrasy, when she has come to appreciate the subtle beauty of the natural craftsmanship of which this particular irregularity is only one element, she will have a deeper appreciation and a greatly increased enjoyment of all art that is the natural, untutored expression of born craftsmen. The Oriental artist expresses himself freely and simply. He is concerned with achieving a final, harmonious balance and beauty. When he undertakes the making of a rug he might just as easily have wide fringe at both ends, simply by leaving four or five inches of warp thread exposed before he starts his weaving. To him the fringe is not of importance. Sometimes, to be sure, Oriental disregard for obvious symmetry seems to go to absurd lengths. In this case, however, the lack of fringe at one end (which is so common with conventionalized and geometric rugs) can easily be overcome by sewing on a yard or two of mopsy fringe where it is lacking. When it comes to subtle artistic balance, which goes deeper

than the mere external balance of fringe on both ends, those who own Orientals and have lived with them for years, can testify that Oriental weavers have a feeling and an ability for expression that is unparalleled.

Quite often the question arises as to how thick an Oriental should be. Does a thick rug wear better than a thin one? This is very hard to answer in a single sentence, but I would like to say that the thickness or thinness of a rug depends upon the locality where the rug is made. Rugs of a certain family are either thick or thin, characteristically, depending upon the tradition of the village or city where the rug is woven. For instance, almost all the rugs which come from Kazvin are fairly thick-napped, thicker than those from Keshan where characteristically thin-textured rugs are woven. Again, Bidjar rugs are very substantial in appearance with a firm texture and a thick nap, generally, whereas the Senna rug, which is woven in the same neighborhood by people of the same cultural level, is considerably thinner, or lower in nap. These rugs sometimes are so thin that they are almost as pliable as a piece of cloth, which can never be said of rugs from the Bidjar family. In general, the wearing quality depends upon the quality of the wool. The rug texture varies with almost every family that weaves them. Therefore, never use it as an argument for superiority or inferiority. Some rugs are traditionally fine and others coarse, in just the same manner.

Quite often I have found in my experience that some of the self-styled authorities on Oriental rugs have shown extreme partiality for a limited group of Orientals as being the finest rugs woven. My belief is that no one rug is the superior Persian rug, although one type may appeal more strongly to an individual taste than another. We have charming rugs in almost every weave. In some

the technique of weaving may be outstanding, in another it may be the intricacy of pattern and the minuteness of detail which is noteworthy. In still another, the beauty of the rug lies in its child-like simplicity. When you ask for a superior rug, you must have in mind what you are looking for in a rug. Are you most interested in the fineness of weave, the workmanship, the simplicity of design? To you, depending upon your cultural background, any one of these factors might be most important. The rug that appeals to you most is the rug for your needs. Another person, with a different background, reared in a different environment, might choose one entirely unlike yours. Both of you are right for you are not appraising the rugs abstractly, but emotionally. If it satisfies you, the rug and the weaver have contributed much to your happiness. How monotonous the world would be if everyone decorated his home only with Sarouks and Kirmans!

It is good to have all the information one can possibly obtain on Oriental rugs of all categories so that one may appreciate them fully and be able to discuss them intelligently. Like books and paintings, they have their pros and cons, yet no one type suffers for patronage. Sometimes we need practical information to guide our emotional choice, for if it is a hard-wearing, durable rug we need for a front hall, it is well to focus our attention on the types of Orientals that are durable as well as artistic. I would suggest a Bidjar, a good Hamadan, a good Serab, a good Sarouk, a good Bibikebad, a good Kazak, or almost any rug from Azerbaijan Province where the wool used for rugs is most durable.

For you who are seeking a touch of delicate tracery to give your room a light, lacy touch, what could be more beautiful than a pastel Kirman? For your pine-panelled room there is no more charming rug than a Boukara. If your taste is conservative, you will enjoy a lovely Tabriz, Fereghan, or Saraband.



A Sarouk rug with exquisite handling of design and color detail.

Oriental rugs have infinite possibilities for the discriminating taste of different people, to satisfy desires for varying colors, and to fit all types of rooms.

Oriental rugs, like music, have always played a part in the artistic enrichment of gracious living. Wherever good paintings are appreciated, or classical music enjoyed, Oriental rugs are to be found. People who have lived with Oriental rugs and enjoyed their comforting radiance, need not be told what to expect or how to enjoy their rugs. They have unconsciously become aware of their penetrating, subtle harmony of color, cheer, and warmth.

In my experience, I have found one group of people who see good only in plain, simple, primitive Oriental rugs. Another group is just as firmly addicted to floral rugs. They are each within their rights, as I have taken pains to point out. But I do not want it to be misunderstood that a 9 by 12 Gorevan rug is of the same monetary value as a 9 by 12 Kazvin or Bidjar. There is a vast difference in price. The Gorevan is worth only about a third of the value of either of the other two. But price should not be the only determining factor in influencing your like or dislike of a rug. I am trying to help you to see rugs in terms of their own intrinsic appeal, not in terms of their market price which is determined by such factors as supply and demand, technical perfection, and current popularity. All these factors have little relationship to the rug's artistic merits. Rugs which are less intricate and thus simpler to produce, such as Gorevans, Heriz, or Karajas, are not as expensive, size for size, as Kirmans, Qums, or Sennas.

In conclusion, a rug is as good or as bad as its appeal to you for your need and your taste. Appraising a rug is not always as simple as it might seem to the owner, for sentiment and personal reasons may place it out of any competitive



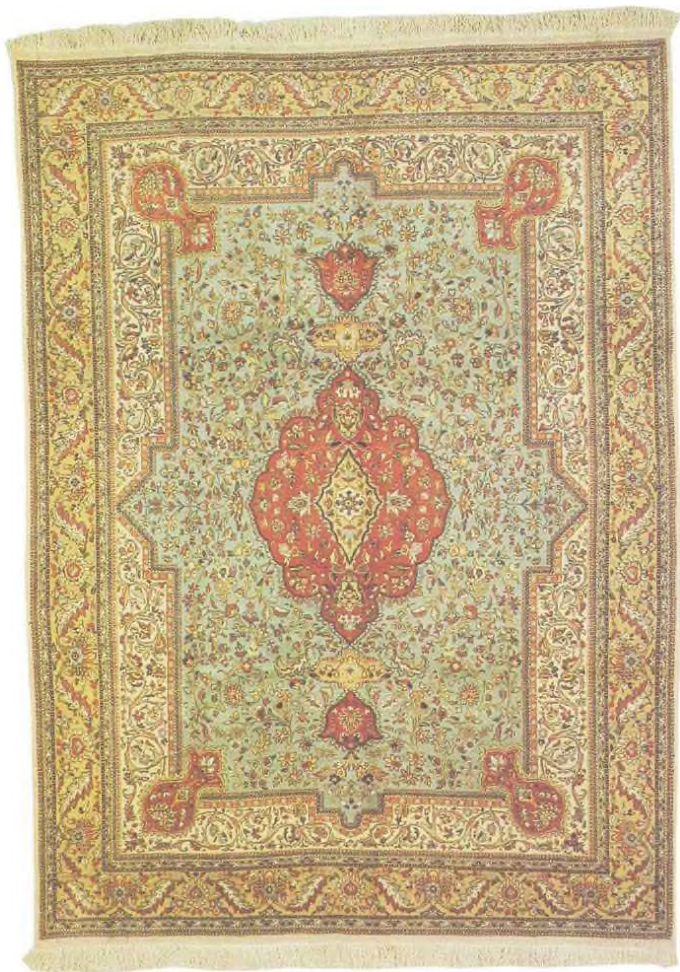
*Malayir Sarouk (Persian)*

*Size 4.4 x 6.6*

*Circa 1900*

Sarouk is one of the most famous names in Persian rugs. These rugs come from a small village that is completely isolated at the base of the mountains. The road to Sarouk ends at the village. This classic Sarouk rug was woven with one large central medallion in an open ivory field. The rug is finely woven, using the best of wools and dyes, the nap clipped low to give a firm texture. These older Sarouk rugs of floral design rank with the most sophisticated floral rugs woven in the cities. Sarouks of the last generation have been equally well made but with a heavier texture. Such rugs enjoy a reputation second to none.





*Tabriz (Persian)*

*Size 9.1 x 12*

*Contemporary*

A contemporary rug woven under the patronage of the Taba Tabai family in Tabriz, using the finest of local wools and dyes. The Taba Tabai family have encouraged the use of classical patterns from the 16th and 17th centuries, as in this example which uses motifs similar to early ceramic inlay work.

price category, in fact beyond the power of any money to buy. This does not mean that the rug is priceless to the trade, but only to the owner. Sentiment and personal reasons are beyond price. It is in the trade that rugs reach a level of price depending upon the times and the demand. Some types are more popular at certain periods than others, as Sarouks have been in the last two decades and as Kirmans are today. Fashions change in this country in rugs as in everything else.

In the final analysis, a choice Oriental rug is like a precious stone. It is not evaluated so much for its size as for its beauty and its perpetual radiance that forever delights those who see it or live with it. Persian rug craftsmen all through the history of human artistic achievement have poured out beauty to enrich the living of people all over the world. Today, as in the past, they are still making rugs of all types, some poor, some mediocre, but a vast majority that are truly beautiful and enduring. In every one there is the human element that makes it always fresh and alive to lovers of beauty all over the world.



*Yahyali Rug (Turkish)*

*Size 4.2 x 8.6*

An exquisite example of Turkish weaving. The border colors are in bright lemon yellow, and the field coloring is a little more orange red than the Sivas rug on the opposite page.





*Qashqai (Persian)*

*Size 4.2 x 7.6*

*19th Century*

This rug with its delightful blend of nomadic ideas has a freshness and beauty that only an unspoiled weaver can create. The spirited horse is full of action and the noble horseman is travelling with all his trappings. Notice the umbrella to protect him from the harsh elements. It also indicates that he is a person of some consequence. The generous use of gold is in indication that the weavers are of Turkish origin. The use of cypress trees, however, is more common to the neighboring tribes of Bachtiaris than to the Qashqais. The extra end borders are typically Turkoman. The ancestors of the Qashqai weavers came from Central Asia. Could it be that they were of the same stock as the unknown weavers of the Pazyryk rug.



## SYMBOLS IN PERSIAN RUGS

It is no accident that the designs and symbols used in Persian rugs are forever reappearing, generation after generation, as weavers repeat what their ancestors have woven for centuries. Long ago certain patterns were worked out by different rug weaving tribes at their respective cultural levels. The simple nomads used geometrical motifs intermingled with childish figures, while the city folks designed and executed rugs to perfection, like architects, complex in pattern and intricate in meaning. Yet underlying all the designs, simple or complex, is the strong Persian philosophy which is common to rich and poor alike.

Whatever his station in life the Persian accepts life as it comes, and has a simple explanation for whatever happens. If a serious mishap occurs, a Persian says simply, "It was written to be so." They believe absolutely in Kismet or fate. Yesterday is past, and tomorrow will take care of itself. Omar Khayyam has phrased this fatalism many different ways. He exclaims, "Tomorrow!—Why, tomorrow I may be Myself with Yesterday's seven thousand years." Or he



Persepolis, Palace of King Darius.  
Bas relief of King Darius stabbing  
a lion.

advises, "Tomorrow's tangle to the winds resign." With such an attitude toward life the Persian is able to undertake any task that appeals to his fancy, expecting that it will some day be completed if fate wills it to be. Only with such a philosophy of life could he embark upon the weaving of a rug which seems to us almost as fantastically impossible to execute as the labors of Hercules.

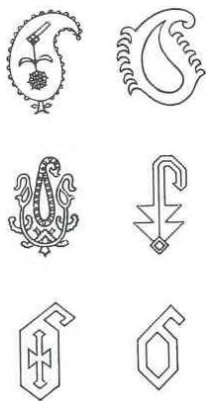
The Persian's belief in the supernatural dominates all his thinking, and adds a sort of sparkle to his life which no outsider can appreciate unless he puts himself into a sympathetic frame of mind toward the Persian philosophy of life. There is something really fascinating about the Persian's ability to find a reason for everything that happens. If it is a calamity, then he explains it by the Evil Eye, as a curse or as a punishment. The supernatural is a convenient tool to play with, to explain things by, to reason with. It plays an important part in his everyday life, and of course his rugs give it expression.

The Evil Eye is still a strong force in Persian thinking today, just as it was all throughout Europe during the Middle Ages. It is not confined to the primitive nomads, but is just as strong among the Persian city people. Wherever you go in Persia, you see people taking steps to overcome the effects of the Evil Eye. It is not in good taste anywhere in Persia to remark on the beauty of a child in the presence of its parents, because if that child were to die in the following week of measles or small-pox, the well-wisher would certainly be blamed. His envious spirit cast the Evil Eye upon the child. I remember myself as a child in Persia, that there was a common belief in our village that a colony of evil spirits lived under a bridge which spanned our little river. When it came time for our cattle to cross this bridge as they returned at sunset from grazing, my grandmother used to meet the cattle and tie burlap around the cows' udders to

protect the milk from the spirits as the cattle crossed the bridge. I remember blue beads being sewed upon my garments to ward off evil spirits that might endanger me, or influence me, or creep into my system and cause me to die. Perhaps I owe my present robust health to these beads which my mother sewed on all my clothes!

It is a common practice for the weavers of Shiraz, Bactiari, Belouchistan, and Boukara to sew a string of blue beads along the edge of their rugs so that the weaver will not be cursed when someone shows envious admiration of his work. Nor are blue beads the only device used by rug weavers to protect themselves and their families from the Evil Eye. In Shiraz, Saraband, Fereghan, Bidjar, Senna and many other rugs, you will find tiny little roosters indiscriminately used to ward off the Evil Eye. Persians believe that roosters have evil within themselves, so they protect against other evil. Again there may be long strands of colored threads extending from the selvage side of some rugs, from an inch to five or ten inches in length. They are intended to serve as jumping-off places for any little evil spirits or oriental gremlins that have not already been pushed, kicked, or charmed off the rug. Examine your own rugs and see how many have these simple little colored tassels. You had better not shear them off, for they are the only exits for any little Oriental gremlins that may inhabit your rugs! The Oriental goes one step further, however. Before putting away a rug he will sweep it thoroughly, to remove by force any last evil spirits that have not been counteracted or removed before!

If a woman is working at her loom, making a particularly striking rug, and someone in her family is taken ill, all work on the rug stops at once. Probably someone admired the rug, and cast the Evil Eye upon the weaver's family.



Badam Designs.

Nothing more can be done until the person recovers or dies. In either case the spell is then broken.

Much has been said about the use of the tree of life as an Oriental pattern. This design has been used by Persian rug weavers. Sometimes it is one big tree, springing from one end of the rug and filling the whole field of the rug. Again it may be a series of little trees repeated over and over. With the nomads, the tree is represented simply by two little leaves springing from a straight stem with a rosette at the top. But whatever the shape or size, each carries the same message, the Persian symbol of immortality. To show the solid reality of life, the trees are represented with their roots firmly fixed in the ground. In Parsee philosophy these trees also indicate that Man is erect, upright, and life-giving like a tree. There is a still older Persian philosophy which likens human life to a rose on a rose bush. This school of thought infers that life is beautiful, yet it has its thorns. This belief is represented by a wild rose bush which is a very common pattern in almost all our older Sarouk and Keshan weaves. Usually the vines emanate from the corners of the rug and twist and turn gracefully across the field until the whole section is covered. When the weavers wish to show that life is transient and ephemeral, they often depict cut flowers, usually roses in a vase. Quite often this is used as a main field pattern in Kirman rugs. Rugs from Keshan, Kazvin, and Tabriz also make use of this pattern subtly worked into the borders or corner pieces.

The weavers of Bachtiani like to represent life in its many phases. They very charmingly work complete little pictures into their rugs (See p. 129), depicting their philosophies of life, each panel a complete unit in itself. If it is sorrow they wish to represent, they will have one panel showing a weeping willow tree;



*Kirman (Persian)*

*Size 4.4 x 6.6*

*Circa 1800*

The weaver of this Kirman rug was of the old classical school of weaving for which Kirman was famous. Cypress trees such as these were used by early Persians as symbolic of eternal life. The small decorative details of rose bushes surround the trees. Notice that all the bushes including the cypress trees are set in vases with the addition of four birds. Obviously the rug weaver was influenced by Persian poetry which is full of references to singing birds, nightingales and the beauty of Persian roses.





*Harcha Gun Bachtari (Persian)*

*Size 5 x 9*

*Circa 1875*

This is a fine example of Bachtari weaving from the Feidun area. In the Isfahan bazaars this rug would be called Armenibaft, meaning Armenian woven. All the Armenians in this area and in Julfa originally came from the Caucasus. Although they have been living here for more than three hundred years, the weavers have retained many of the ancestral ways. The sharp primitive patterns of the Caucasus have been softened and have taken on a little more sophistication but the basic design is there. The center border between the two ivory ones has a strange design I have not seen in any other rug. It looks like a series of sitting hens.

if it is elegance or arrogance, they show an upright juniper tree, solid and straight; if they want to indicate prosperity, they use an ear of corn or a sheaf of wheat. All these panels gracefully alternate with each other, giving the rug charm and beauty as well as a message for anyone who can interpret it. In some of the elaborate Tabriz rugs, the weaver will often try to represent the four seasons. Sometimes he will divide the rug into four sections, each representing a natural landscape: winter with snow, spring with tiny miniature flowers pushing their heads up through the Persian landscape, summer with trees in blossom, and autumn with a harvest scene.

Of course we are all familiar with the use of rugs to pray upon. Prayer rugs are not rarities. They are woven just like any other Persian rug, their chief identifying feature being that they have at one end a pointed or rounded pattern which resembles a doorway or the entrance to a mosque. The shape of this prayer point is determined by the ability of the weaver and the tradition of the place where it is woven. A nomadic rug will have a sharp, angular point (See p. 141), whereas a Kirman will have one that is greatly embellished and domelike in appearance. Both indicate the same thing, that this end is to point toward Mecca when it is used for prayer. Not every devout Muslim is fortunate enough to own a prayer rug. Only the privileged can afford one.

The designs used in prayer rugs usually have some connection with the use for which the rugs are intended. Often there will be a tree of life to indicate the belief in immortality. Sometimes the weaver will put on each side of the prayer point representations of outstretched hands. This is to indicate where the hands of the worshiper are to be placed as he kneels in prayer. Often a little rake-shaped comb will be woven into the design to show that the



*Belouch Rug. A tree of life springs from a decorative pot.*



one who prays upon the rug is a poor but pious man, for the comb indicates cleanliness, a Muslim virtue. Occasionally some crafty Christians in the Caucasus will make prayer rugs for the Muslim trade, keeping all the designs and the prayer motifs perfectly traditional. But here and there, subtly concealed, they will place little crosses, symbols of their Christian faith.

The henna plant is widely cultivated in Persia. Our English word *henna* is taken directly from the Persian. Henna dye is highly prized by Persians who dye their beards and finger nails as well as the wool for their rugs with this little plant. In Azerbaijan Province rugs are made which use the henna plant for a main pattern. This design is known as the Guli-Henna or Flower of Henna.

If you were to ask a simple Persian what is the largest animal in the world, he would very probably tell you the turtle. An old Persian belief is that the world is flat, and rests upon the back of a huge turtle which holds it up from the depths. In the water surrounding the earth are two huge fishes, which swim round and round the flat earth as if chasing each other. It is the momentum of their movement which causes the earth to turn around, bringing day and night, the changes of the seasons, and all other earthly phenomena. In Persia there is hardly a week that one does not feel tremors of the earth, which only strengthens the belief in this old tale. If the two fishes were ever to catch each other, or if the turtle were to be upset, the Persians believe the world would end. This story, in which the world is represented by a rosette with two encircling fishes resembling leaves around a flower, is a common pattern used by the weavers of Fereghan, Herati, Kandahar, Tabriz, and, with other patterns, by almost all the other weavers of Azerbaijan Province. The turtle always appears in the borders of these rugs, alternating with this Herati or fish pattern, (See p. 19)





*Bachtiari Rug*      *Size 3.3 x 13.9*      *18th Century*

This is another unusual treatment of the *badam* (almond nut) design used by an imaginative Bachtiari weaver for both the field and the main border design. Migratory weavers use this pattern rather casually and without too much effort on perfection of design. There is generous use of gold and touches of turquoise. The outer narrow border is composed of a series of falcon-like birds. The ends of the rug are finished with a band of embroidered kilim weaving.



*Karadagh (Dashi-e Moghan) Azerbaijan*

*Size 4 x 8.6*

*19th Century*

An exciting example of primitive weaving, a natural expression of simple farming people. Similar to the rugs of nearby areas (Karabagh, Talish and Gendji in particular), the rugs of Karadagh have nevertheless a strong individual cast of color and design. The cocoa-brown field is typical. Note the in-completed medallion at the top of the rug, abandoned when the rug had to be finished more quickly than originally anticipated.

The turtle is strikingly clear in the Fereghan, Tabriz (See p. 19) and Herati rugs, but it is only suggested by an outline in nomadic weaving.

Some of our choicest rugs woven in Persia are used by the nobility purely as prestige items. They are always hung on the wall or rolled up and stored away except for times of great celebration when they are brought out to be displayed. (See p. 48) If it is a big outdoor celebration or parade, they are hung out on outside verandahs. The fineness of these rugs, and the quantity of them is a subtle indication of the family's wealth. Sometimes such rugs are woven entirely of silk, sometimes certain parts of the pattern are picked out in gold or silver threads. I have seen rugs which show a fruit tree, with the fruit made of precious or semi-precious stones. Some of the most beautiful effects are achieved by using a series of matched rubies to represent clusters of grapes. For the celebration of an occasion where the spirit is one of joy, rugs which indicate joy and merriment are all on display—hunting scenes, scenes of nature, sporting scenes which are in keeping with such an occasion (Frontispiece and pp. 42, 44, 47). If the time is one of mourning, then the rugs displayed will show clusters of grapes which are emblematical of tears and sorrow, or they will show weeping willow trees.

The beauty of an Oriental rug can be felt whether you understand the meaning of the many little figures and designs or not. But when you come to understand something of what lies behind them, how much more interesting and alive your rugs become! They are no longer just floor coverings or wall hangings, artistic and charming to live with. They become ambassadors of peace and understanding from another race of people.



*Gaba*

*Size 4.6 x 6.9*

*Contemporary*

A strikingly beautiful rug woven by nomadic Arabic-speakers who live at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. Although it is woven with homespun simplicity the rug radiates a warm glow like a brilliant piece of jewelry. The three medallions stand out in sharp contrast against a clear red field. The two bands in brown at either end of the red field are an original concept with the weaver. All the wool used was hand spun and rich in lanolin, while the dyes are of vegetable derivative. The red field is just beginning to soften and with age will show contrasting red changes, making the rug even more desirable. Note the two embroidered bands of Qashqai-type woven at both ends of the rug. This rug has an affinity to some Kazak rugs woven in the barren Steppes of Central Asia.



## FROM LOOM TO MARKET

If you own many Oriental rugs and have come to love them, do you ever stop to wonder who were the weavers of your rugs, where they came from, how such lovely things came to be offered for sale by the weavers who created them? If you have come to admire them through living with them, how much greater must have been the weavers' attachment to them after working so hard to make them. Since the making of a rug is so laborious and time-consuming, since so much of one's self goes into the weaving of a rug, at its completion the weaver does genuinely regret parting with it for any money. Out of his very real reluctance to sell the product of his mind and hand the Persian weaver has developed an elaborate and to us rather ludicrous system of dickering and bargaining. As a child whenever I went with my father to the bazaars, I remember that I was always greatly amused at the way in which a bargain was achieved.

If, for instance, my father had his eye on a particular rug which he wanted very badly, he would not think of going up to the weaver and saying bluntly,



Little weavers of Isfahan.



Weaver of Melas, Turkey.

A young weaver who obviously enjoys her work of creating beauty.



Melas weaver with her grandmother and the rest of the family.



"How much would you take for that rug?" Such a remark would be the rudest of business etiquette. Instead he understood that he must use the round-about Oriental method. He would go and call on the weaver, drink his tea by the hour, talk about the weather, the harvests, and the abilities of the different members of the weaver's family. When the tea or the sugar gave out, he would depart pleasantly. A few days later the same procedure would be repeated in a similar fashion. Of course the weaver knew that my father was interested in the rug, although it had not been mentioned, and my father knew that the weaver understood his desire. After so many trips the opportune moment would come for my father to say casually, "If you were to sell that rug to someone, how much would you ask for it?" Whereupon the weaver would throw up his hands and cry, "May Allah strike me blind and my time of weaving cease, should I ever want to part with such a masterpiece, the equal of which is not to be found in Azerbaijan Province." Again more tea would be drunk and a pleasant parting would take place.

After more gallons of tea had been consumed, at last the time would come when my father would actually take the bull by the horns and offer the weaver a price. How insulted he would appear to be—without being quite insulted enough actually to drive my father away! In a few moments he would begin to find reasons why he might make an exception in this one case. Only from my father, with whom he had drunk so much tea, could he ever endure to hear the vulgar words, "Will you sell me the product of your hands?" After much palavering, and many cautious compliments on the weaver's work (cautious lest he bring the Evil Eye upon the unfortunate soul), my father would make an offer, the weaver would demand much more, and they would clasp hands—a

clasp which could not be broken until they reached a satisfactory agreement. This final stage of the transaction would seemingly never end, but at last a third party would be called upon to break the deadlock. He would listen to the bitter complaints of each party to the deal, and finally he would set a fair price which they were both honor-bound to accept. The handclasp would be broken, more tea drunk, and the rug would change hands. My recollection of these deals is very vivid for I waited eagerly for the termination of the bargaining. I always received a penny or two from the seller as a *baksheesh* or a tip, offered as part of the general celebration.

Sometimes months are actually spent in timing the opportune moment for the purchase of a rug. It may be watched by a prospective buyer all the time it is in the process of completion, especially if it is a particularly good rug. As long as this method of doing business prevails in Persia, so long there will be a discrepancy in the prices of any two rugs from the same province, no matter how similar they may appear. Each transaction is separate. No weaver knows exactly what price he should charge for his rug, for he has no way of figuring the cost. The material came from the backs of his sheep, the dyeing was done by some member of the family or a neighbor who took a little of the wool in payment. His time was worth nothing to him. So no money is involved until he comes to sell the rug. He sets the price according to his mood, feeling justified in whatever he asks. Those of you who have knitted anything from a pair of socks to an elaborate bedspread can appreciate to some degree how he feels.

Buying rugs in my generation has changed only slightly. Today Persian *dallals*, or agents, go from weaver to weaver, and from loom to loom, either buying rugs outright or taking them on *amanat*, in trust or on consignment.



*Soumak (Shamakha) (Caucasian)*

*Size 8 x 11.6*

*Circa 1880*

This is a classical example of a flat-woven Soumak. Most Soumaks are of a similar proportion, color and pattern arrangement. Unfortunately there are few remaining, most of them have been abused beyond repair. As early as 1561, Antony Jenkinson, traveling for The Moscovy Co., was the first Englishman to visit Shamakha in the Caucasus. There he was presented to the great Persian Khan. Jenkinson especially remarked on the exquisite rugs that were spread in the yards: no doubt they resembled this example. In Soumak tradition the beginning of the rug as well as its finish is decorated with "Soumak" flat weaving. Also, the braiding of the fringe threads is very characteristic. This is a striking example of primitive art, revealing the peasant taste for simple effects. The combination of persimmon reds with tile blue makes the rug glow.



These rugs are then carried to the main city bazaars, most of them eventually reaching the Teheran rug bazaar. The rug section of this fascinating bazaar has taken over a large section. Here I do most of my buying. Every time I return on a buying trip I find more and more little shops have been added. The old *serais* which were large, open areas within the so-called covered bazaar, were the places where, even centuries before Marco Polo's time, caravans of hundreds of camels, laden with goods from India or China and destined for Mediterranean seaports, made lengthy stopovers to unload and to take on other merchandise. Now these old *caravan-serais* are no longer adequate to hold the merchandise for sale. Today's method of buying and selling involves a local agent, his sub-agents, and their *hamals*, or porters. We travel through the rug areas together, inspecting the merchandise of every small or large shopkeeper in the dark, crowded covered bazaar. (See pp. 60, 61) Then when we show interest in any rug, out of nowhere there materializes a man with a tray of small glasses of boiling hot tea and a heaping dish of sugar cubes. As soon as one glass is finished it is whisked away, and replaced by a fresh one. They do not stop until you vehemently protest that you can drink no more. Now it is time to try to reach an agreement on price. I go through much the same mental gymnastics and histrionics that my father used to do a generation ago. The idea of bargaining, of turning buying and selling into a game of wits rather than a cold business transaction is an important part of the purchase of every rug. I find it exciting and pleasurable, even though it is exhausting and time consuming, for when once the sellers discover that a buyer has real knowledge of what he is purchasing, and a sense of values, they respect their opponent and one can feel it in their tactics, even though the parting words, after every deal, from the seller

*Kashgar (Pillow Cover)*

*18th Century*

A small jewel of a rug from Chinese Turkestan, originally woven as the cover for a feather-stuffed pillow. The embossed effect was created by using knotted pile weaving only for the design, the background being a plain flat-weave. The brilliant yellow coloration is classically Asiatic.



is "*Zarar kardam!*" "I am taking a loss!"

Most of the weavers have very wild and fantastic ideas of what their far-distant American buyers want in Oriental rugs. Many are of the opinion that we here prefer rugs that are substantial and heavy in weight, with patterns that are plain and simple. It is a common saying in Persia that people in America take great pride in saying that it took three men to carry a rug into their house. In Persia, rug connoisseurs say of a fine rug that it is so soft and supple it could be put through the eye of a needle. I am not implying that rugs of heavier texture, like the Kazvins or Bidjars, are not highly esteemed in Persia. On the contrary. But Persian taste does not judge a rug by its weight.

Of course some commercialization in rug weaving has crept into Persia, and it has brought with it some standardization of sizes and prices. Today in Sultanabad, Hamadan, Kirman, and other cities hundreds of looms are owned and operated by American importers, who actually dictate the patterns, colors and sizes of rugs woven. The weavers are hired and paid by their accomplishment, usually on the square foot basis. Since these rugs tend to be in many instances more uniform and more mechanically perfect rugs, they appeal strongly to some people.

We must always bear in mind that Persia, unlike the other Oriental countries, does not have teeming millions of population. Unlike China and India, each with their six hundred million people, Persia has only twenty million. There are relatively few who are able to devote themselves exclusively to rug weaving. It is a good indication of their native artistic gift that this small race is as productive as it is. However, with the American and even more European demand for Oriental rugs increasing, it is safe to predict that some of our choicer rugs may



*Borchalou (Persian)*

*Size 4.8 x 10.4*

*Circa 1925*

Borchalou is a small village in the Hamadan vicinity. They are almost all farmers and their life history has been a continuous struggle for survival. In long winter months almost every family has a loom or two, weaving rugs. Most of them are childishly floral with a central medallion, freely using ivory, green and yellows. The rugs seldom exceed in size five feet by seven feet. This fine example is longer than most, using a design more often used by weavers in neighboring villages, such as Enjelus, Tarametz, and Fereghan. Could it be that the weaver was a bride from one of these other villages who was admired for her talent as well as for her beauty? The repeated pattern is delightfully detailed and the colors well blended. The Coral red is a specially favored color among Borchalou dyers.



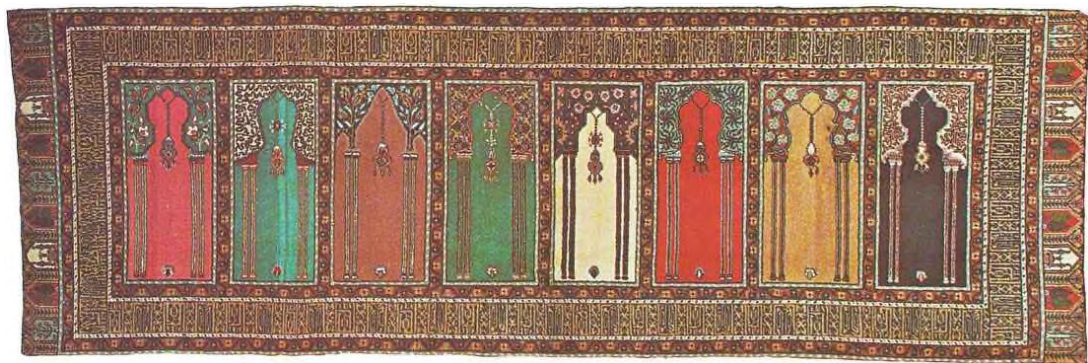
well become priceless, while subsequent rugs from Persia will be bound to increase in price. The market for Oriental rugs here is still young and growing.

When we see Oriental rugs in almost every well-furnished home, when we see them stacked to the ceiling in rug stores and warerooms, our first reaction is, "How can a relatively small race of people produce so many rugs without turning to machine methods? Can each be the laborious, time-consuming work of an individual?" One of the first reasons that they seem so plentiful, is that these rugs wear so long and are replaced so much less frequently than other products whose life expectancy is shorter. I know scores of homes where rugs are being used today that were bought a hundred years ago. Along with other rugs bought subsequently they will continue in use almost indefinitely. So when you consider the untold numbers of rugs accumulated in this country's salesrooms and in its homes, remember that they are not the product of one decade or even one generation of work, but that they represent many generations of weaving. If they had to be replaced as frequently as most of our short-lived articles, Oriental rugs would certainly be scarce and almost prohibitive in price by now. Very few Oriental rugs are discarded even when they become threadbare and worn. I know many homes where Orientals which are worn down to the knots are cherished as family heirlooms. They are still beautiful, mellow and soft in color, with an added charm and dignity that has come with age. I am not advocating the use of threadbare rugs, but merely indicating the fact that a good Oriental rug, even when almost all its nap is worn away, is still beautiful, capable of many more years of service, and worthy to be cherished as a family heirloom.

However, it is a fallacy quite commonly held that just because an Oriental



Weaver's Tools.



*Kayserai Saph Prayer Rug (Turkey)    Size 2.7 x 7.10    Contemporary*

This family prayer rug was woven in Kayserai. It has eight prayer panels each a complete rug with a hanging mosque lantern design. It is a colorful and decorative piece, more often used as a wall hanging than as a floor covering. When the family prays together, they kneel and face the rug. The design of the outer main border is delightfully interlaced stylized Kufic Arabic writing. The extra borders on both ends of the rug are finished with miniature prayer rug designs.





*Erebuni Kazak (Armenian)*

*Size 6.10 x 8*

*Dated 1913*

The Erebuni were an ancient Armenian tribe that lived in the vicinity of the modern Erevan in the eighth century B.C. Recent excavations have brought to light the colors and designs used in their palace walls. Descendants of these ancient builders, like this rug weaver, have woven rugs showing the same color preference and geometrical designs, although the ancient ruins were unknown to them. This Kazak was woven in the vicinity of Erevan, probably in one of the many small villages which still survive. The superlative brilliance of this Kazak, its simplicity of design and stimulating color combination of deep apricot reds, turquoise, black and accents of orange and ivory are as bold as any rug woven on the sandy steppes of Central Asia. Rugs of this vintage were the last of their kind to be woven in the Caucasus. The coming of World War I and the subsequent tragedies brought this wonderful art to an end. Dated 1913 and signed in Armenian.



rug is old, it is of necessity valuable. No poor rug becomes valuable just because of its age. It is only a rug that is well made, traditional, embodying all the art of the weaver's craftsmanship, that has infinite possibilities for future appreciation, both in price and in beauty. If the rug was good in the beginning, time will improve it. A poor rug grows worse with age. Perhaps you wonder just what age does to improve a good rug. Time really works miracles which the weaver well understands and plans for. First of all, ordinary usage given a rug in the course of years evens the surface of the freshly clipped nap. Wear polishes the surface, and gives it a natural glow or luster which becomes increasingly radiant with time. Actually the process is exactly the same as that which used to make the elbows and seats of the old serge suits shine. The colors of the rug when freshly dyed were somewhat heavy and dark, but each soap and water washing takes out any surplus dye and makes the colors softer, lighter, and more beautiful. Time softens and blends the colors to make the whole more harmonious. It is like brass or silver which has been polished over and over until it gets a soft patina.

When a dealer tells you that a rug is semi-antique, it is said with much pride. It is not to be misunderstood that the rug is "second-hand" or "used" in the American sense, but that it was "seasoned" in Oriental fashion to make it more desirable and suitable for harmonious use in any home.

The process of seasoning is practiced in many different ways in Persia. Some of you who so tenderly cherish your rugs, who are afraid to vacuum or sweep your valued Orientals, would be shocked to learn what rough treatment your rug must have received before you owned it. I have walked over hundreds of rugs in the bazaars of Teheran, Kirmanshah, and Hamadan where the rugs are



Hamadan woman working on rare rugs which the author purchased in the town bazaar.

placed in the streets, or bazaars, in front of shops or homes, for the purpose of letting passing people and animals tramp with their muddy feet across them. Sometimes they get so dirty and muddy that you might think no pattern was left in the rug, for the Oriental streets are not hard-surfaced like ours, and the dust and mud are thick. When the owner feels that the rug has had enough of this treatment he, with the help of a *hamal* or porter, will take it to the nearest river and there scrub the rug with rough brushes, reeds, and sand until the colors begin to show again, and the nap perks up. (See p. 55)

The rug is left to dry in the sun. When the rug is brought home for examination, the owner will get on his hands and knees with a crude pair of curved shears, and will clip any nap that stands high after this treatment. If the texture is not yet smooth, even, and lustrous enough, the process will be repeated as many times as necessary until the desired effect is achieved. The final step in the Persian process of beautifying a rug is to put it in the owner's home where all his family walk upon it in their woolen stocking feet. This rubbing of wool on wool gives it the final polish and glow, which enables a dealer here to describe the rug proudly as semi-antique.

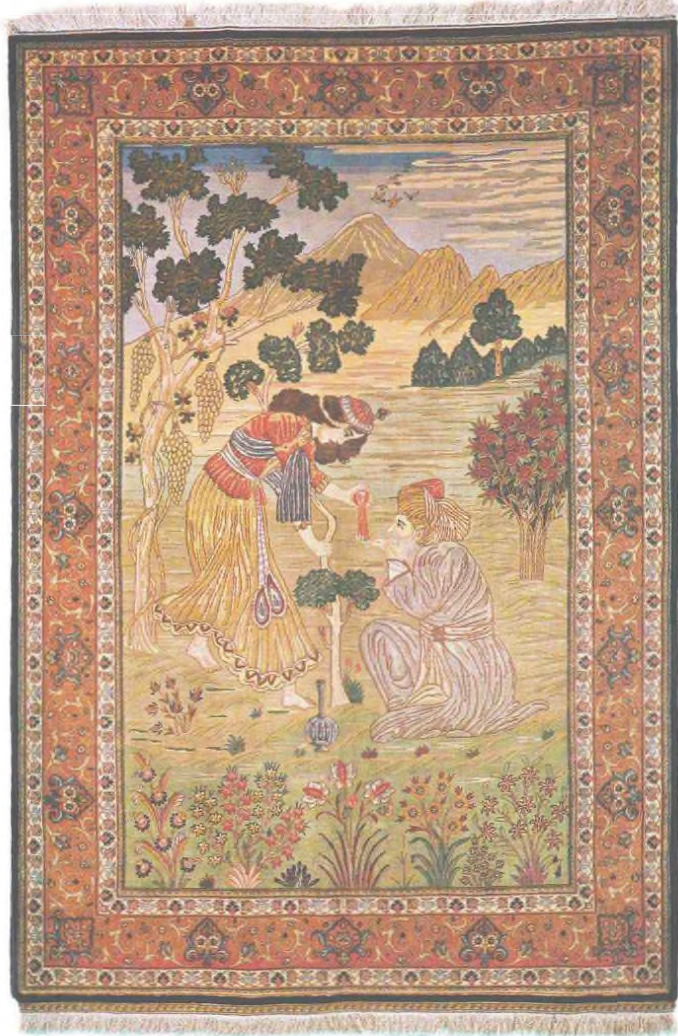
From the time the weaver starts work on his rug to the day when it comes into your home, an Oriental rug experiences adventures which could be the subject for a truly fascinating story. They are as colorful as the rug itself.



*Agra Rug (India)      Size 7 x 8.3      18th Century*

A rare double prayer rug from India. The spots where hands, knees, and toes have rubbed on the rug through years of use show considerable wear. The two main panels are decoratively colored, one in soft green and the other in dull orange. In the main border there are a series of cartouches very much in Persian style. Originally these were woven to carry decorative, descriptive messages or stories. This rug makes generous use of gold and lavender.





*Tabriz (Persian)*

*Size 4.10 x 7*

*Contemporary*

A superb example of contemporary Tabriz craftsmanship. The treatment of the subject is typically Persian miniature style. The weaver has the rare ability to create with wool and dyes what an artist creates with canvas and paint. Every bit of the detail is exquisitely woven and delicately shaded. The artist has let his imagination roam freely. Note the unusually large clusters of grapes twined about the trunk of the tree and the well-trimmed roses in full bloom which grow with a natural modesty beside a brook. Wild flowers spring up in ordered precision along the lower border of the rug. A sense of perspective is achieved by a steeply-rising background which terminates in angular, barren mountains, contrasting sharply with the lush foliage of the foreground. The graceful figures in the center of the rug depict a well-known scene from the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam, translated by Edward Fitzgerald as

A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread, and Thou  
Beside me, singing in the Wilderness  
Ah! Wilderness were Paradise enow!



## THE PAST AS IT LIVES IN PERSIAN RUGS

Just outside our village in Persia there was an interesting dome-shaped hillock which we boys used to climb. We liked to slide down on the side where the earth was being continually carried away by the people of the village for use in making pottery. We were always present whenever anyone was digging, for hardly a cartload of dirt was taken away without some ancient implement, coin, or relic being brought to light. The workmen were interested only in "finds" that they could turn into immediate cash. Bronze utensils, ancient broken pottery, beads and other worthless trash they just discarded, and we used to pick them up, child fashion, and accumulate our private collections which we would cherish for a while and eventually discard. Not until I came to this country and became fascinated by archeology did I begin to yearn to see and handle again with my new knowledge, these relics of a past of unknown antiquity. Nor was this particular mound anything unusual in Persia, for the whole land of Iran is full of archeological remains just waiting to be discovered. Almost every village is built

upon the ruins of other ancient cities. Whenever virgin soil is ploughed some interesting relics of the past come to light. Almost all these discoveries were worthless to the Persians' eyes, unless the find included an amphora filled with gold pieces, as occasionally happened. Happily the Iranian government has become interested in the archeological past and has made strict laws forbidding unlicensed export of any archeological finds. What seemed valueless in my boyhood now finds its way to the bazaars and shops of dealers in antiquities.

The ancient past and the living present are very closely held together in Persia by the unchanging Persians. Today they are perpetuating customs, ideas, and ways of life that were established in the long-ago days of which these bits of bronze and pottery are concrete evidence. In like manner the Persians have built up a tradition of rug weaving which is the inheritance of a race of people who have practiced it for centuries with hardly any changes in technique or patterns. Each invasion or counter-invasion instead of annihilating the weaver's trade added more color and charm to the already established art.

Persia is one of the last Oriental countries to come to our attention in this country. Much has been written on the glories of its past in studies of ancient history, but comparatively little is known of modern Persia. This lack of information has been a hindrance to the spread of accurate knowledge of Oriental rugs. Ironically it is the Oriental rugs in this country that have brought Persia and its people to the attention of the American people. Every time you say, "my lovely Keshan," or "my Bidjar," or "my Bachtiani rug," you are calling the name of some leading place or tribe into focus. And almost every one of these names, obscure to us and significant only as the name of a rug, has a past, which, if we but knew it, was glorious in the annals of history.

*Jejim (Kurdish)*

*Size 5 x 6*

*Circa 1900*

This flat weaving is done in narrow strips about eight inches wide which are sewn together to gain width, so that they may be used as items of utility. Nothing is spared in the weaving to make it beautiful. These Jejims have multiple uses, but are commonly used to cover the low, bench-like table which is placed over the floor-oven in the evening when the family gathers around the source of heat. It not only serves to conserve the heat but also as a tablecloth on which food is served.

The coral-red is much favored by Kurds. All Jejims like this are reversible and become waterproof when used as shelters in the open. Some of the finest flat weaving is done by the Kurdish people. The weavers who make these utilitarian items, however, are not held in high esteem by other weavers.



Take, for example, the name Souj-Boulak, today's Mahabad. Only a few of you can be fortunate enough to own one of these lovely rugs, for the place is so small, and the inhabitants so few in number, that only a few rugs, comparatively speaking, have been produced there. The little, obscure hamlet today boasts more ruins than houses. But in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries it was the capital of the Seljuks who overran Central Asia into Persia, Iraq, and the rest of Asia Minor, establishing their citadel and capital in Souj-Boulak. Here was a city of Oriental splendor, where art and architecture flourished. But the Seljuk dynasty concentrated its efforts in Anatolia, and this little hamlet was almost lost in rubble. To the casual observer it seems impossible that such beautiful rugs could come out of homes that are mere mud hovels, where people live in poverty. Yet these people are heirs to a glory that is past. We must not underestimate them, even though they seem to us like characters from the Arabian Nights, with their baggy pants, colorful blouses, and fringed turbans. Their physical poverty does not extend to their mental outlook which is rich, resourceful, and full of color and charm. The rug which we call Souj-Boulak is the outward expression of their rich heritage from the past. Incidentally, the literal translation of the name contributes something to the poetic charm of the rug, for Souj-Boulak in Turkish means "The Soothing Brook."

Almost all the little hamlets in Persia today had a colorful past whose influence is still evident in their rug weaving. The weavers of Karabagh, near the Caspian Sea, show strong Armenian, Persian, and Mongolian influences in their weaving. There is a little of the Chinese, or Central Asian in both their coloring and their design composition, even though their work is basically Persian. I am thinking particularly of a beautiful Karabagh rug (see p. 65) with a well-covered

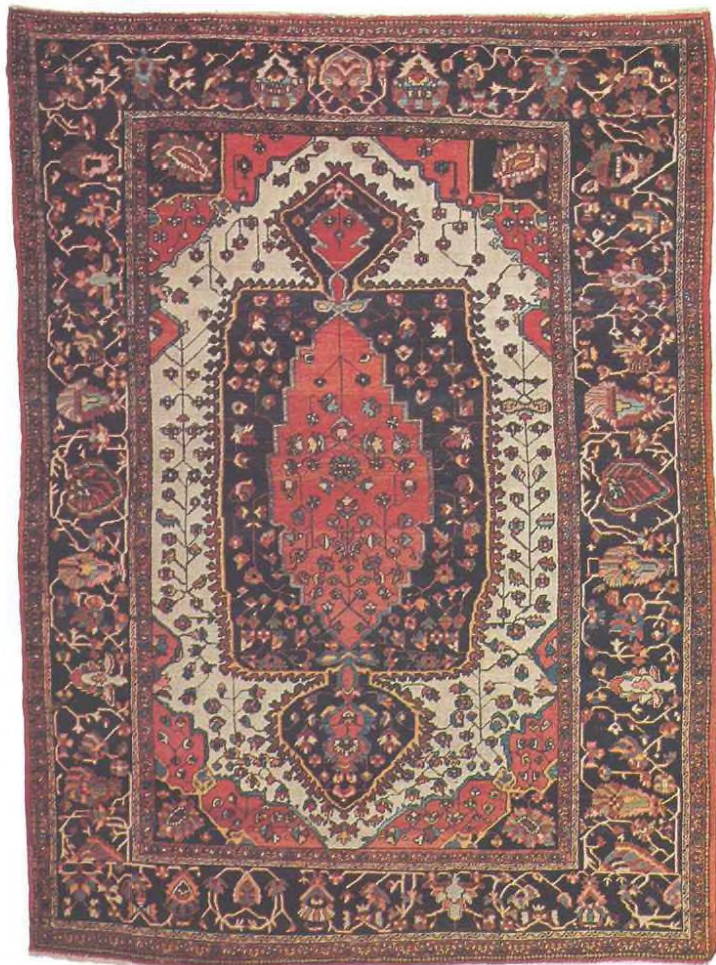


*Malayir Sarouk (Persian)*

*Size 4.5 x 6*

*Circa 1890*

In all Sarouk weaving there is an unbroken tradition of jewel-like central medallions and semi-floral patterning. In this example a stylized rose bush has been worked with childish simplicity around the central large medallion, against the ivory field. At the beginning the rug was densely patterned to the point of being overcrowded, but as the weaving progressed more open spaces were left. Note also that there is less pattern in the upper portion of the small medallion. There is a sense of insecurity in the designing of the last third of the rug. Could it be that a second weaver completed the rug? The color changes in the rug reveal it as a characteristic product of home weaving. Each new lot of wool was dyed separately, giving a variation to the color far lovelier than even dyeing. Clearly this is a simple, homemade work of art, the lasting record of a humble family which did the best it could.



field. This particular rug could easily be mistaken for a Samarcand rug, because of the simplicity of its design, or for an Armenian rug because of its generous use of light blues, or for a Persian rug, because of its border design. The Mongolian hordes poured through Karabagh Province into Persia for so many centuries that they left their imprint upon many aspects of life here and upon the technique of rug weaving. To me such a Karabagh rug is the best example of the merging of Aryan and Mongolian art.

The weavers of Tabriz are perhaps as richly endowed as any craftsmen with their heritage from the past. Tabriz is the capital of Azerbaijan Province, and the bastion city of all northern invasions. It has enjoyed prosperity, it has been the capital city of the Persians, and it has been a center of commerce. In days past it was on a main caravan route over which passed caravans laden with Persian merchandise destined for Istanbul, thence to Venice, Barcelona, or Vienna. Ever since the eleventh century Persian works of art have been brought to Tabriz and thence distributed to the homes of European nobility and western courts. And of course these caravans came back laden with things for Persian use. This contact with the western world brought prestige to Tabriz and made it for a time the main outlet of Persian merchandise. With this trading there came people of other cultures and other racial characteristics. In its bazaars one hears Armenian, Jewish, Kurdish, Tartar, Assyrian, and other tongues. So great have been the foreign influences that even the Persian spoken there is strongly tinged with Turkish and Tartar. The weavers of Tabriz were in a position to own or to see some of the finest rugs made anywhere in Persia. Therefore it is not strange to see a beautiful Tabriz rug almost identical in texture and pattern with a Keshan or a rug from Herat. Almost every beautiful



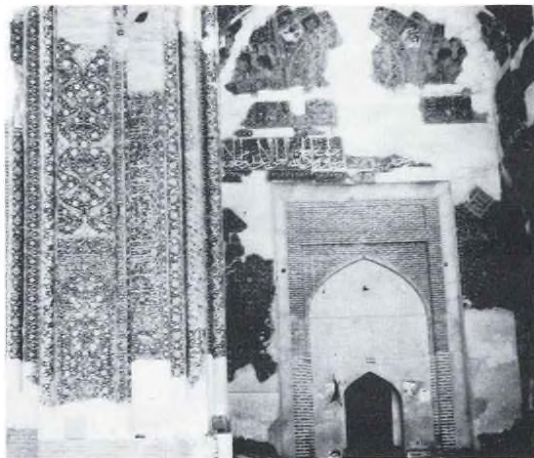
Picturesque Isfahan whose turquoise blue minarets and mosques make its distinctive skyline.

Saadi's Tomb. Shiraz is known for its rugs, its wine, its roses, and the tombs of her two famous poets, Hafiz and Saadi. The conversation of every Persian is enriched by appropriate quotations from these poets. Even the simplest shepherd boy can recite stanza after stanza just for his own personal enjoyment. The grandeur of Shiraz is summed up by Hafiz, "Fair is Shiraz and matchless her display, Oh! God protect her ever from decay."



Blue mosque of Isfahan.

The entrance to the Blue Mosque of Tabriz. This famous mosque was destroyed by the invading Mongols. It is now in process of gradual restoration.





rug woven in Persia has been copied, at some time, by weavers of Tabriz. To this day they are famed for being great mimics, not only in their rug making but in other forms of art. They are a resourceful people, full of vision, and capable of making rugs of any size, proportions, or pattern. This ability is not an overnight growth, but a tradition left to them by the early caravan traders.

There is an interesting historical sidelight on the work of the weavers of Kirman. In the seventh century when the Arabs overran North Africa, Asia Minor, and some of Persia, the Persians were forced to give up their worship of Zoroaster and accept the new faith of Mohammed. But some of the leaders of the country—craftsmen, artisans, merchants and heads of religious bodies—fled away from the invading hordes. Some went as far as to Bombay, but a large group settled in Kirman. There they established their homes, far away from their conquerors. To this day they are looked upon as leaders in crafts and in philosophy. They are cultured people, and prosperous leaders in all professions. The rugs they weave are consistent with their lives—choice, delicate, and finely detailed.

Those of you who own any number of Oriental rugs must have one or two Hamadans. We use the name casually, without any thought except that it is a rug name, but how much richer is its significance if a few more interesting facts are known. In the Old Testament Book of Esther this city was called Ecbatana. Today a tomb still stands in the ancient city, known as the Tomb of Esther and Mordecai. It was in this city that Alexander the Great feasted and was assassinated. Early Babylonian and Persian history repeatedly speaks of Ecbatana, today Hamadan. Its rugs are as varied and colorful as its history. Because of its complex community life, its rugs are of varying cultural levels. For when



we speak of Hamadan we really are including dozens of little communities in the vicinity of Hamadan. They are dependent upon the city for their sustenance and yet every village makes its own style of rugs which come to this country classed all together as Hamadans. Thus Hamadan rugs are a little harder to identify, for no two rugs follow an identical pattern of weaving, although all have a strong family resemblance.

Kirmanshah rugs in the minds of many are erroneously synonymous with Kirman rugs. This is a city which can boast of a magnificent historical heritage. Yet very little is known of it in relation to its rug making. Like so many other Persian cities it has a strong artistic heritage, for the most beautiful stone carvings and archeological findings of Taq-i-Boston are located just in the suburbs of Kirmanshah. And of still greater archeological importance are the stone inscriptions of Behistun, which is about twenty miles from Kirmanshah. Here are recorded the achievements of King Darius and the record of his exploits. As a youngster, I was quite interested to see this great cliff, and I marvelled that anyone had been able to climb the sheer face and carve the figures that towered hundreds of feet above the caravan route. Although we were there more than a week, not one native villager who lived at the foot of this towering cliff was able to tell us anything of its meaning. And yet it must have been by the sweat and labor of their ancestors that these carvings were accomplished. They must have been both courageous climbers and artistic sculptors.

And this obscure hamlet of sixty or seventy homes, wind-swept and desolate, apparently lost to the outside world, produces rugs which are striking and simple without being primitive. Again one wonders how people in such circumstances could have the vision and foresight to be able to weave anything that is so



A nomad's donkey carrying a lantern and a newborn lamb in the saddlebag.

beautiful. But when we take into account their heritage, who knows but that these very simple people may be the descendants of the sculptors of the great rock. In all probability Darius searched throughout his empire for artisans best fitted to do this great work. He was very much aware of the fact that he was leaving a tremendous monument for posterity. Today rugs from this little hamlet and Kirmanshah are brought here loosely classed as Kurds, Senna Kurds, or for want of a better name, as Hamadans. Not one person in a thousand dreams of the past which lives today, in a sense, in these beautiful rugs.

The city of Kazvin had a past which is particularly interesting to English-speaking people. It was the ancient capital city of the early Sefavid dynasty of Persia, and was an important caravan center. From Kazvin, trade routes led to the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus, to Meshed and thence to Afghanistan and India, to Tabriz and Asia Minor. In the course of its history it has been overrun by the Seljuks, Mongols, and Afghans. These invasions have left a marked influence upon Kazvin's architecture and present day culture. Kazvin rug making, reflecting its past, has certain unusual characteristics, particularly in its coloring. Here there is a strong Afghan influence in the soft henna rose which is so commonly used for a background color.

At the end of the sixteenth century Queen Elizabeth sent two Sherley brothers as unofficial ambassadors to Persia, and they visited Kazvin. When they returned to England they took back a tremendous wealth of Persian gems as gifts from Shah Abbas to Queen Elizabeth. Among the gifts were twenty-four Kazvin carpets. The Sherleys' descriptions of Persia and its wealth aroused the imagination of other adventurers, and as a result other travellers began to go to Persia. This was the beginning of the opening up of Persia and its vast resources to the

European world. The Sherleys themselves returned again to Persia and introduced to the people the use of gunpowder—a poor return indeed for the precious rugs and gems they took away! It comes strangely to my ears today when someone says to me, “Kazvin rugs? Is that a new name in the field?” Today they have become so popular that the little town itself is not able to weave enough to meet the demands of American trade, and the nearby city, Hamadan, is imitating Kazvin work. There is, of course, a great distinction between the real and the imitation here, as in everything else.

How little most of us who are able to buy Oriental rugs for a price, know of the rich, colorful past that lies behind them! Sometimes one pattern alone in a rug has been crisscrossed for centuries from one race, one culture, one country to another. Today some obscure weaver who repeats this pattern is no more aware of its historical significance than I was of the significance of the mound upon which I played as a child. And you, walking upon your lovely Orientals, are equally unconscious of the part that the past plays in enriching your home decoration today.





*Shirvan (Caucasian)*

*Size 3.6 x 5.3*

*Circa 1850*

A fine example of Shirvan weaving, using polygon shaped medallions to represent *guls* or flowers. This design is most commonly used by *Uzbeks* in Samarkand and the rug weavers of Kashgar in Chinese Turkestan. The field pattern is similarly designed to harmonize with the larger *guls*. The pleasant color changes in the background reds indicate many dye changes while the accents of yellow give a decidedly Turkish flavor.



## TRADITIONAL VERSUS COMMERCIALIZED RUGS

I have spoken repeatedly of Oriental rugs that are traditional. By that term, I mean, as I have explained, the spontaneous, unspoiled creations of weavers who are repeating according to their own imaginations and desires, the patterns that have come down to them from the past. They are using the dyes and the techniques of weaving that their forefathers used for generations. I have tried to give you a background for understanding *why* Oriental rugs are the way they are, so that you will not be critical of some of their characteristics. When you understand them, you see that these very idiosyncracies are really what make them charming. For example, I have tried to help you become aware of the way in which the Persian people live, without regard for time, for money, or for any of the little refinements of living which seem essential to the highly cultured western world. I have also tried to help you understand that these same people have an inner vision for beauty which far surpasses everything within the range of their outward vision, and makes them capable of creating

designs and color harmonies which amaze us. I have tried to show you why Oriental rugs are a little crooked here, a little varied in color shading there, fringed on one end and not on the other. All these characteristics apply to the Oriental rugs which I have been discussing—the traditional, unspoiled rugs which come from the hearts of the weavers.

But today Europe and America are the largest markets in the world for Oriental rugs. And America is especially fashion minded. Some of the Persian business men in the large cities have caught this spirit, and are exploiting the ancient art of their countrymen for foreign markets. They have set up hundreds of looms in Hamadan, Tabriz, Sultanabad, and Kirman, on which rugs are being woven as rapidly as anything can be done in the Orient for export trade. Since these rugs are being made for a particular market, they are woven with certain basic colors, designs, and sizes which are known to be favored by foreign buyers. To be sure, the rugs are made by the ancient process of tying innumerable knots by hand, and the designs are basically the old ones which are typical and traditional. But the spirit behind these rugs is different, and to the really sympathetic lover of the old art, they lack something which is essential. The fine, intricate detailing is gone, for that takes more time. With it goes some of the jewel-like quality of the rug. The wool for these rugs is spun mechanically, to save the time required for the laborious task of spinning the strands of raw wool by hand into yarn of uneven texture. Mechanically spun wool, of course, is much more even and more adaptable for weaving. Rugs woven with this wool have a finer and more regular look. On the backs of these rugs you will not find the little bumps and irregularities which testify to hand-spun wool. In the traditional process, the wool was dyed by the weaver or by the local master of dyeing.

*Ganji Kazak (Armenian)*

*Size 3.10 x 8.3*

*Dated 1888*

A fine piece of Caucasian weaving, using firm heavy mountain wool, which gives it the thick texture of more northern Kazaks. It is however not so bold as those from Central Asia. Geometrical in spirit, it employs a series of medallions for the main motif, with the afterthought of small goats woven into all but the first medallion. Not all Ganji Kazaks are Armenian, but this example is inscribed with the Armenian weaver's name and the date.

The inscription reads on one side, *Nubar Gregor Bagdasariantz 1888*, *Marian 1888* on the other, and the word *aghuh* or salt (symbolizing baptism) also appears in the border. That the rug commemorates an important event is clear, but whether of birth, baptism or marriage cannot be ascertained.



The secret of the way certain colors were achieved from roots or herbs which grew in the locality was passed from father to son for generations, just as were all the rest of the rug making processes. All the rugs made in one locality for centuries have been characterized by these particular colors. But this process is both lengthy and uncertain in its results. We have noticed how often there are changes of color in a traditional rug. In making rugs commercially all this time consuming process and this uncertainty can be eliminated. But with its elimination goes the fascination that lies in a rug in which we find the struggles of the weaver to secure a particular shade all recorded for us by the different color changes in his rug. Since he was an artist he used these color changes to the best possible advantage, and his rug became doubly interesting and beautiful because of them.

Of course, I would be the last to declare that these Oriental rugs made by commercial methods are not good floor coverings. They are. The wool is still of top quality, although often it is later put through processes of glazing which do impair somewhat its natural wearing qualities. The colors are beautiful, even if they do not have all the subtle range of shadings which we find in the old rugs. The designs are Persian and interesting as designs. But looking at them through the eyes of an artistic lover of beauty, they are without an inner significance. They come from hands not from hearts. They are not the records of the thoughts and feelings of individual weavers, but copies of what others have made, repeated to order, by weavers who are not creators but human machines.

The commercially made rugs are just meeting a current, temporary fashion which will certainly pass. Today the rage is for pastel Kirmans. It was for Sarouks in the past two decades. What type of rug will dominate the trade



in the future is uncertain and depends upon the trend in American and European taste.

My hope is that with more and more education creating greater sympathy and understanding for traditional Orientals, they will increase in popularity. They "belong" in every sense of the word in homes of culture and refinement, just as fine music and beautiful paintings do. After all, they have been used in cultured homes ever since they were introduced into Europe in the sixteenth century. They have outlived every fad and fashion of interior decoration. They will still be delighting the eyes of beauty lovers when the decorative plans that some current designers are whipping up are as outmoded and ridiculous in our eyes as the stuffy Victorian rooms we smiled at indulgently in *Life with Father*.

But Oriental rugs were at home in those rooms too, just as they were at home in the drawing room of Mt. Vernon, the southern mansions of old Virginia, or the colonial homes of Salem, Marblehead, Cambridge, or Boston. Great designers have used them with colonial, with classic, and with modern forms of architectural design. They are equally suited to elegant parlors daintily dressed with Hepplewhite and Sheraton pieces, and to the extremely severe modern decor that uses nothing but cold concrete and glass to achieve pure functionalism. In hundreds of homes with which I am personally familiar, Oriental rugs are being used today to achieve beautiful, unusual, and subtle effects flattering to the other furnishings and satisfying to live with year after year.

When I spoke of the rugs that are being produced commercially in Persia, I did not intend you to believe that with their coming all weaving along the traditional lines stopped. It is still continuing in all the little hamlets and villages away from the commercial centers. It will always continue there, for the Persian



Attractive Persian weavers.

people are not as quick to change as the Western world is. They like to go on doing things just as their fathers and grandfathers did before them. Commercialism will never take a strong root in their natures unless all their way of life is completely changed. Such a change is very unlikely.

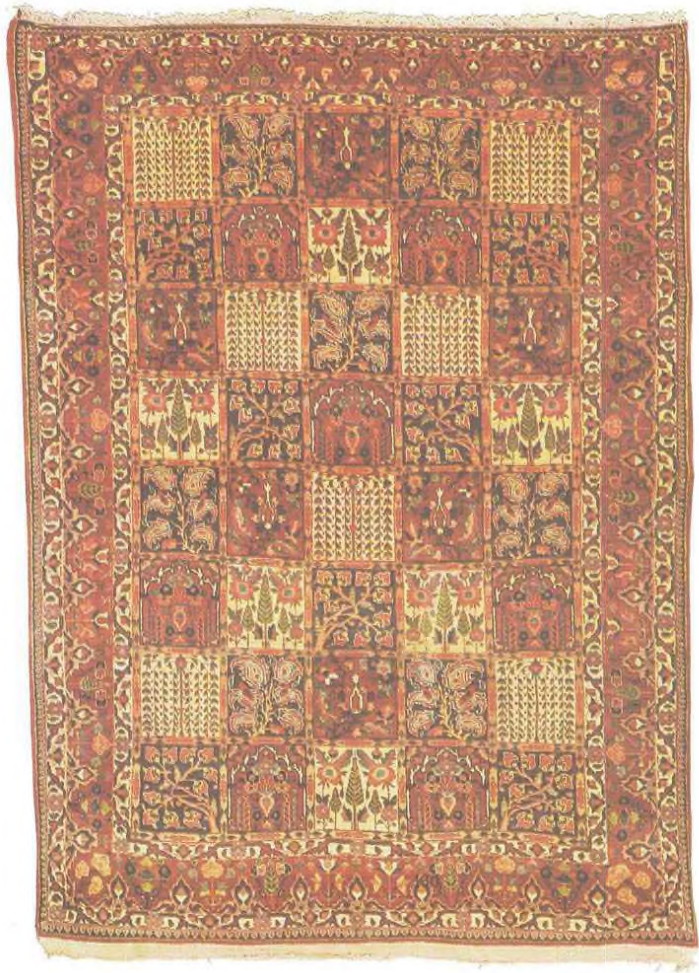
The future of Oriental rugs is thus really a trust to the modern generation. Since Germans and Americans are the biggest customers for their product, even the most humble and remote weaver who hopes ultimately to realize some profit for his rug, keeps his heart turned not toward Mecca, but toward the West as he weaves. So far only a small percentage of the weavers are affected by the commercialism of the large cities. But as our demand increases, its effect may be felt increasingly even by the remote nomad who, in the back of his mind, hopes to sell his rug eventually in some city bazaar or to some visiting trader who will send it on its way toward Europe or the United States. If year after year he is told to change his colors or designs if he wants to get more silver for his work, he may at first refuse, but eventually he will probably compromise even against his natural desire. He will resist a long time, for it is much easier for him to weave rugs as he always has with patterns and colors that he can use almost without thinking, just as he has done ever since he could sit up at a loom and tie knots.

Here in this country we can and we should keep this ancient art alive in its traditional aspect. Our demand will help to do it, for the poor weavers know that their work is worth a price to the traders, and they are human and susceptible to the power of profit. It is amazing that their art has endured unspoiled as long as it has in a world which is almost wholly dominated by material considerations. We owe it to the future to patronize this art which is practiced by a whole race of people, not for selfish gain but for their own self-expression

*Baku*    *Size 3.6 x 12*    *Circa 1850*    *(Caucasian)*

This rug was woven on the Caspian Sea coast, using a pattern much cherished by weavers of this coastal area. The *badams*, or almond nuts are stylized in such an interesting fashion as to give them the appearance of little walking bird-like creatures. The alternating positions of the design gives a runner a well-balanced, elegant effect. Within the *badams* there are stylized flowers in decorative pots. The dyes are brilliant and imaginatively blended, but the brown field has with time oxidized and recessed, giving the central pattern the effect of being woven in relief.





*Chal Shotor Bachtieri (Persian)*

*Size 7.3 x 10.6*

*Circa 1900*

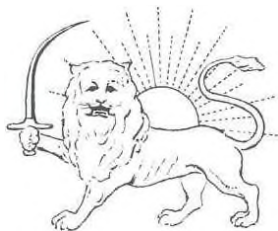
Chal Shotor is a small Bachtieri village about ten miles from Shari Kurd. Some of the finest rugs ever woven by Bachtieris have been made here. On my recent visit to this village I found many homes where rugs were still being woven in the same old traditional way. Looms were stretched flat upon the floors, holding rugs in various stages of completion. Even today I found many families still using walnut rinds, grape vines and stems, henna, soumak and other herbs to make their dyes. This Bachtieri is composed of a series of fully designed panels. Each square is a picture in itself. The weeping willows, the cypress and the fig trees and the prayer niches are imaginatively arranged, to create a pattern within a pattern. Soft terra-cotta reds predominate and with time the rug has acquired a rich patina. In a classic design such as this, one can see the ancient Persian fondness for gardens and the out-of-doors.



## HOW TO ACQUIRE A KNOWLEDGE OF RUGS

One of the commonest misconceptions about Oriental rugs is that the greatest number of beautiful rugs is still in Persia. Does it surprise you to learn that ever since the sixteenth century, and more particularly in the last century, the choicest rugs have been leaving that country for Europe and America and other parts of the world? This process has gone on so consistently and for so long, that Persia has been impoverished of its heirlooms, except for the rugs of a few wealthy families who will never part with their prized possessions. So today the choicest rugs that have any age at all are not to be found in Persia, but scattered throughout the rest of the world. When you stop to consider that Oriental rugs adorn innumerable homes in England, Italy, France, the Scandinavian countries, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, as well as here in the United States, in Canada, and in South America, you realize how vast a number of rugs have left the land where they were made. Many of these rugs, especially in Europe, have been in certain families for generations. Today Germany alone is buying four times as many rugs from Persia as America buys.

The Renaissance enlarged man's horizon and made him conscious of the breadth of his universe. It was perhaps only natural that Oriental rugs, the product of a different type of civilization and a different philosophy of life, should appeal to the Renaissance mind, which sought to encompass all knowledge, and all forms of artistic expression. We find them depicted in many paintings of that prolific period, their rich colors adding warmth and life to the canvas. From then until the present they have been carried by caravan and by ship all over the world. Today they adorn the tents of nomads in the desert, the ancestral halls of Europe's vanishing royalty, and the homes of culture and refinement in the democratic New World. It seems that people of all ages and all levels of society must find delight and satisfaction in living with these products of Persia's own unique art.



Oriental rugs came to these shores with the worldly goods of the well-to-do early settlers. More came in the clipper ships which our Yankee skippers guided to the far corners of the earth and brought back laden with every imaginable treasure from distant shores. Consequently some of our choicest rugs today are in homes along the Atlantic seaboard. I have personally seen evidences of this on Cape Cod. Many an unpretentious white-clapboard or grey-shingled house in these little New England villages contains treasures in Oriental rugs as well as old and priceless objects of art from Singapore, Bombay, Istanbul, and Basra. Once while shopping in a grocery store in Chatham, on Cape Cod, my eye was attracted by a man who was putting his groceries into a very choice Shiraz saddle bag. Judging by its appearance I was quite sure that it must have considerable age, and my curiosity was aroused. I approached the gentleman and asked him if he knew exactly what he was using for a shopping bag. "Oh,

just some fool thing that has been kicking around the house for years," he replied. I questioned him further and he said he guessed likely Grandfather might have brought it home along with lots of other trash he picked up in his sailing days.

Today there are countless homes in this country where there are rug treasures whose origin, value and artistic merit are unknown. So if one is to discard an old Oriental rug, it is well to find out first whether it is a worn-out bit of trash, or a priceless heirloom. Some dealers, even, do not always recognize a treasure.

With such a vast number of rugs in the country, there should be much more information available about them. For many women the correct use of their Oriental rugs is their major problem of home decoration. They can find innumerable books on glass, china, silver, and period furniture, but when they try to study Oriental rugs, they come up against real difficulties. To understand Oriental rugs thoroughly requires, I believe, a three-fold knowledge. First, it requires a sympathetic understanding of the Persian people, in order to understand and evaluate their rugs as cultural achievements. I have already tried to show you how an understanding of the weavers helps you to recognize, almost at a glance, whether a rug is the product of a nomad, a city dweller, or a village person. As I have emphasized repeatedly, a nomad is a simple individual and his rug is simple, childishly geometrical in pattern. The city folk are the opposite, people with well-ordered lives and carefully thought-out philosophy. Their rugs are worked out in fine detail. The village people or country folk live monotonous, hard-working lives. In their weaving they express the monotony of their existence by the repetition, row after row, of simple, unconnected designs. Because they are expert designers their rugs have a soothing and conservative beauty which places them in a position of high regard with many people.



*Tavrish Rug*      *Size 2.8 x 4*

Tavrish is a small hamlet in the suburbs of Hamadan. Tavrish rugs are woven with a delightful blend of coral, ivory, yellow and touches of green. There are almost always little animals or birds appearing in the design. In this rug there are four little birds apparently hovering in flight over flowers which protrude from the central medallion.



*Kirmanshah (Persian)*

*Size 4.6 x 6.8*

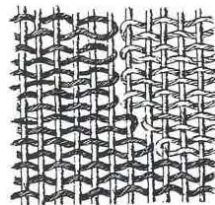
*Circa 1900*

Very few rugs are woven in Kirmanshah even though it has some of the best wool in Persia for rug-making. It is the last frontier city of importance before reaching Iraq. Until World War I most of the rugs exported to Europe and the rest of the world passed through this heavily Kurdish inhabited city. The weaver of this rug was influenced by Saraband weaving. (See Plate 163.) The central field pattern is like most Saraband patterns except that this weaver took the privilege of playfully introducing members of the family and barnyard animals with three or four legs, whatever best fitted spaces on either side of the central design. Two ewers such as are used for washing the hands also appear as symbols of cleanliness. The rug is coarsely woven of heavy, tightly spun yarn which causes unevenness of texture. The border medallions show the influences of Caucasian and Hamadan weaving.



The second requisite for an understanding of Oriental rugs is an accurate knowledge of the geography of the country. This knowledge assists one in becoming familiar with rug names. Of even greater importance, it helps one understand how the quality of the wool depends upon the kind of region where the sheep graze. Since vegetation is quite lush in Azerbaijan Province, the wool grown there is rich in lanolin, and so resilient that it is almost indestructible in ordinary wear. By comparison, the rugs from Yezd and Birjand are poorer in wearing quality because the sheep there find poorer pasturage. Goats here, however, fare very well. In Birjand goats produce cashmere wool that is the finest in the world. The water in this region is so strongly alkaline as to be almost brackish, which reacts poorly upon the wool of the sheep. In the extreme southern portion of Persia, it is so hot and unbearable that the nomads follow their sheep from pasture to pasture looking for what grass they can find. In the extreme north, around the Caspian Sea and Afghanistan, the wool is unbeatable for quality. Therefore when you hear someone say an Oriental rug is good for a lifetime, or will wear forever, it is best to find out where the rug was woven. The durability of a rug depends not upon the fineness or coarseness of the weave, but upon the place where the wool was raised.

The third, and perhaps the most important factor in a thorough knowledge of Oriental rugs, is to live with them and let them get into your blood, so to speak, day by day. No two people get just the same reaction from a rug. Your pleasure may spring from the color effects, the interesting pattern, or the subtle blending of both. Like any other pleasant personal experience, it is hard to define. Perhaps the closest thing to it is the joy a music lover experiences in hearing over and over, never too often, a familiar and beloved musical theme.



Kilim Weaving.

But unlike music or painting, Oriental rugs suffer one tremendous disadvantage in the process of giving us enjoyment, day after day. With the exception of a few fragile wall or table pieces, they are constantly under foot, being trampled upon. Some are being pulverized by sand and dirt to the point of almost complete destruction. Choice antique rugs are at a critical state in many homes. They must be rescued soon, or they will be lost forever. Just a little attention now, even a change of place, might save them for another generation. Here in America are to be found some of the choicest and loveliest Oriental rugs of all time. I wish that we might preserve them and protect this aspect of our cultural heritage. Perhaps this is as good a time as any to remind you that a choice rug does not mean an odd rug, with a peculiar design or fancy figures. A choice rug does not mean necessarily a prayer rug, or a rug with many borders. Too many people still cling to these absurd criteria for judging the merits of an Oriental rug.

Perhaps you have in your home today a rug bought years ago by your mother or grandmother for only a few dollars. That was the period when rugs were made without any thought of export, purely for the pleasure of making them for the weaver's own family. The best native talent went into them, and they were truly works of art. My biggest fear is that these choice specimens may all disintegrate or be lost in obscurity. The products of many generations of weavers would thus be lost forever. We who pride ourselves upon perpetuating the arts have a real and serious problem facing us here. Sometimes it seems as if mechanization dominates all our living today. I hope it will never become so strong that we will follow the advice of some misguided decorators who say, "Bleach out the colors in your Oriental rug. Give it to your poor relations. Sell

it for the wool in it." Under such a philosophy, so much beauty would go out of life that it seems a sacrilege to think of it.

For you who respect the arts and recognize the unusual merits of the Persian people in their contribution to the life of civilized man can never be dominated by the thinking of a small group of shallow and fashion-minded individuals whose style for living will be blown away by the breath of the next group of faddists. It is ridiculous for these faddists to encroach upon the field of Oriental rugs, for it is so far above the level of their thinking and so rich in cultural history that they are incapable of comprehending its significance. In reality, when one considers the making of an Oriental rug, one is surveying the past of Western civilization which had its roots in the East and with which we feel a natural affinity. You who live with Oriental rugs never think of them as something foreign to you, for they are native to your Western culture, and make a strong, rich, colorful contribution to your home, your everyday living, and your happiness in life.

Nomadic Weaver.





*Group of Namakduns (Salt Bags)*

Nomadic people carry their salt supply in bags such as these. The necks of these bags are made only just large enough for a hand to reach in and bring out a fistful of salt. The beauty of the craftsmanship and the selection of colors is not slighted because these are items of utility. The large center bag and the one on the lower left were woven by Belouchi tribesmen. The lower middle one was woven by Turkic people in Luristan. The lower right-hand one was woven in Kurd Kuchan. The two top left and right bags were woven by Kurds in Shirvan.



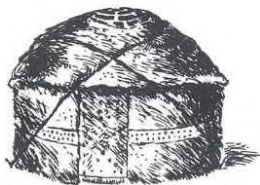
## TURKISH RUGS

Turkey has contributed much to the enrichment of the textile arts. The country we know as Turkey today, stretching from the boundaries of Greece and Bulgaria on the west to the Caucasus and Persia or Iran on the east, not only bridges the continents of Europe and Asia geographically, but unites the artistic heritage of East and West in unusually interesting ways. The civilizations of Greece, Rome, and Byzantium remain in the archeological past of Turkey, but the vigorous, simple, peasant art of the conquering Turks still continues even to this day in the weaving and embroideries of the Turkish people, who are descendants of the Seljuk and Ottoman conquerors.

From earliest days, Turks of whatever tribe have been fond of yellow. It is safe to say that if you see a rug which is geometrical in design and uses yellow generously in its borders or its central design, it is a Turkish rug. Since there are many people of Turkish descent, still Turkish speaking, who live in Persia in the vicinity of Hamadan, Kirmanshah, and Tabriz, or in Khorasan Province, and

who weave rugs, you will find they also use yellow, but not of the same intensity. The presence of yellow thus can be used as an almost certain criterion for recognizing the fact that a rug is the product of a weaver with Turkish inheritance. Since the Turkish speaking weavers who live in Persia have been exposed to Persian design, their rugs are not so severely geometrical, but more soft and conservative in patterns.

The common characteristics of Turkish color and design in weaving come from the Seljuk conquerors. The purest form of this artistic heritage is perhaps preserved in the rugs of the Yürük weavers who inhabit the southern part of Anatolia, on the Taurus range. Here they live in their round Mongol tents, or *kibitkas*, tending their sheep and livestock and perpetuating the life and art of their thirteenth century ancestors. Impervious to the changes of time, their rugs are some of the finest examples of true Seljuk weaving (See p. 141). Almost all Yürük rugs are oblong in shape, very seldom exceeding 4 to 6 feet in width by 9 to 10 feet in length. Their rugs have strong nomadic characteristics, with traces of Turkoman design. They are usually woven in a series of complete panels with a *gul* or large medallion within the center of each panel. The rugs make exquisite use of various shades of blues, coral, orange, and lemon yellows. Some of the finest nomadic prayer rugs are the products of these people. The solid field is usually in one of their favorite colors. Because these weavers work with primitive tools under primitive conditions, using only wool from their own sheep and angora goats, both the design and shape of the rugs are most irregular. Like most primitive rugs, these rugs are finished with a kilim-weave selvege and quite often the weavers choose to braid the warp threads, giving the ends of the rug a tasseled effect. Unfortunately, the braiding is usually done rather tightly



Mongol Tent or *kibitka*.

*Yürük Prayer Rug (Turkish)*

*Size 3.5 x 5.8*

*19th Century*

Yürük weavers continue to weave to this day in their traditional manner after six hundred years of living in Asia Minor, most of them on the Taurus Range in Southern Turkey. This rug has a strong Turkoman influence both in its primitive design and its warm colors. Because these rugs are woven flat on the floor on a horizontal loom they are never uniform in shape. The rich coral reds and various shades of blue are favorites with these weavers. The double-edged comb is fashioned to look like a series of candelabras or miniature trees alternating with small Turkoman *gul* medallions. The series of narrow bands for the border design is in common usage by Turkoman weavers who weave tent and horse trappings in kilim strips.



which pulls the rug together, causing fullnesses at the ends of the rug. Because of the superior quality of the wool, Yürük rugs take on an exceptional luster, similar to Kazak rugs. Yürük rugs have a flavor of their own, which is excitingly rich in color blend and simplicity of pattern. As the rugs grow older, they take on an even greater luster with use. All the dyeing is done by centuries-old primitive methods, which unquestionably they brought with them from Central Asia, using local herbs and vegetables. Therefore one should be prepared to find color changes within the same color. If anything, this dye change enhances the value and the looks of the rug. The weavers use little figures of barnyard animals indiscriminately in childlike fashion. These weavers have remained impervious to influences from the outside world.

Rugs from Kars are very similar to rugs from the Caucasus, especially to Kazak rugs, which come from still further north in Kazakhstan. Kars rugs are quite unlike those from other parts of Turkey. One can easily identify them by their extreme simplicity of design and wide, large areas of solid color. Deep mahogany browns and other brick reds are extensively used for background coloring, but they always carry a strong use of yellow in one or several medallions within the rug, and in the borders. This rug is always denser and heavier than other Turkish rugs. The wool is exceptionally rich in natural oils, giving the rugs a high lustre.

Rugs which are quite similar to the rugs of Kars are those woven by Yahyali weavers. Most of these rugs are approximately 4 x 8 feet in size. The weavers seldom make anything much larger. Like the rugs of Kars they are usually oblong. Among Turkish weavers Yahyalis make the finest use of yellow and gold for background color in the wide borders of the rugs. They are usually woven



*Yazd (Persian)*

*Size 7.9 x 10.9*

*Circa 1875*

From ancient times, Yazd has been famous for its silk rugs and brocades. It is unfortunate that Yazd rugs have usually been sold as Tabriz rugs, because of certain similarities. Yazd rugs, however have certain characteristics which are unlike any other rugs. Yazd is a center for the use of cochineal red; the insects are crushed and processed to make a variety of reds noted for the mulberry, rose or wine-like cast. Meshed and Kerman are the only other rug-weaving areas to use cochineal red to such an extent. Also, the weavers in Yazd use blue weft threads between the rows of knots, which gives the reverse side of the rug a strongly blue appearance. This, coupled with the bluish cast of the reds, make Yazd rugs the "blue rugs of Persia". In Tabriz, by contrast, the basic reds are either madder or henna derivatives which when made into dyes give a coral or terra cotta red.

The design in this Yazd is finely detailed. For reasons known only to the weaver, the rug was prematurely completed, throwing the medallion off center. By daringly completing the rug nonetheless, the weaver shows the independence of the cottage craftsman who works without a designer looking over her shoulder.





*Turkbaft (Turk-woven) (Persian)*

*Size 3.10 x 8.2*

*Circa 1875*

This unusual rug was woven in the vicinity of Shari-Kurd in Bactiari land. The weavers are Turkic-speakers, possibly brought from Azerbaijan during the Zand dynasty. The wool, from Persian fat-tailed sheep, is very rich in lanolin and the dyes are all natural. Although the rug has a blue field, the details of the design sparkle like stars. The field is covered with stylized fishes, trees, goats, chicks and hundreds of rosettes. The extra flat-woven selvage at the beginning of the rug is also characteristic of these people.

with a simple medallion in the center of the rug and a wide, clear, soft red field. Light blue and turquoise are used as secondary colors. Occasionally Yahyali weavers use accents of pomegranate, similar to the weavers of Tekke Boukaras, who accent this color by using it in silk.

The rugs of Turkey are predominately of nomadic color and design, but there are exceptions in areas where the art of the people they conquered, the Armenians, the Greeks, and the Persians from Azerbaijan Province, persisted. In the 13th century Marco Polo records that the finest rugs he saw on his travels were those woven in Kayseri, Sivas, and Konya. These were old centers of culture long before the coming of the Turks, and some rugs made there to this day are so much like rugs from Tabriz, in Azerbaijan Province of Persia, that often only an expert can tell their origin with certainty. We shall speak of rugs made by Armenian weavers in a separate chapter.

Kayseri weaving has changed little in spirit from earliest times to the present. The rugs are very finely woven, low in nap, and varied in sizes from 2 feet x 3 feet mats to rugs as large as 10 feet x 14 feet, often on looms that have been in use for centuries. The workmanship is extremely delicate, as painstaking as most of the better weaving in Persia. Some Kayseri rugs may easily be confused with Persian Keshans, Tabriz, or Kirmans.

The location of Kayseri made travel easy to and from Persia and the Caucasus, from ancient times to the present. It is interesting to see that designs from Ardebil and Tabriz in Persia, and from Shirvan and Cabistan in the Caucasus, found their way to Kayseri and were used by these weavers. No one color is particularly predominant in Kayseri rugs. One finds every conceivable shade of green, coral, wine, and crimson. Very recently weavers here are making rugs



with a-blending of natural wools in shades of grays, tans, and ivories, which give a stunning monotone effect unlike any other rugs made in Turkey.

From the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries some of the finest silk rugs woven for the Ottoman nobility were made in Kayseri or in Bursa. These silk rugs were world famous.

Rugs woven in the villages near Konya (Iconium) are sold as Konya rugs. They are very bold and colorful, with deep reds similar to the reds in Ushak and Yahyali rugs. They also make generous use of strong cobalt blues, and are very much akin in color feeling to Turkoman rugs. The design is geometric and primitive.

Almost every Konya rug is woven with an extra border and a kilim-weave selvage to begin and end the rug. The kilim selvage is decorated with bars of the colors that appear in the body of the rug. The extra borders usually have a series of small icon-like prayer niches, each with a background color picked up from the rug. Within each of these patterns small primitive trees are usually woven with extended branches. The use of these extra borders and selvages is a characteristic of Turkoman weaving.

However, some weavers in Konya today are still making rugs which are pre-Seljuk in design and treatment. They are very much like Tabriz rugs with delicate coloring, well blended and subtle design, and woven in room sizes. This type of weaving they have inherited from their conquered people, the Persians, the Armenians, and the Greeks, who were making rugs centuries before the Seljuks came. Konya rugs are very similar to rugs from Kayseri, except that they are denser and thicker.

In Sivas there are still vestiges of old, pre-Seljuk weaving in some of the rugs



*Kashgar (Chinese Turkestan)*

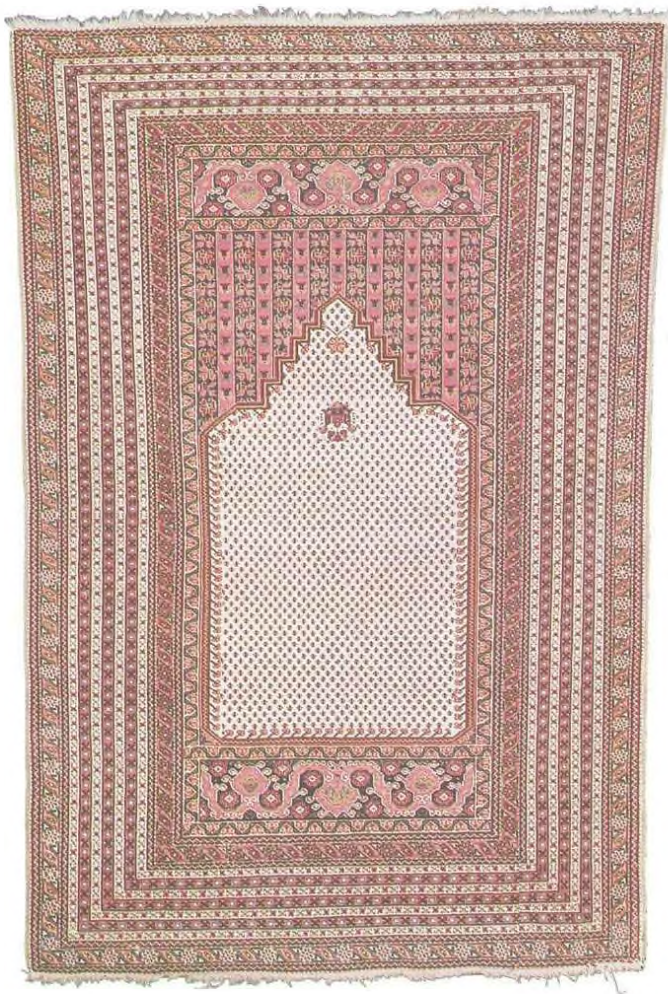
*Size 5.8 x 7.8*

*18th Century*

An exquisite and colorful example of weaving from Chinese Turkestan. It is the product of Turkic-speaking people who live in western China, the ancestral homeland of those Turkic peoples who now inhabit Turkey, the Caucasus, northern Afghanistan, and parts of Persia. As you can see from this collection, almost all rugs woven by Turkic speakers, no matter what their actual geographic location, share a touch of the homeland in simplicity of design, generous use of coral red, and always a few touches of yellow. Their rugs are rarely found in large sizes.

The central design of this Kashgar is childishly simple, a representation of trees and branches. The outer borders are strongly Chinese both in color and design.





*Ghiordes (Turkish)*

*Size 4.1 x 6.8*

*19th Century*

The charm of this Ghiordes prayer rug is in its simplicity. Although the design may seem intricate there is a harmonious repetition of the same pattern over and over again. The colors are soft and muted. As is customary with most Ghiordes rugs, the ivory color is a natural cotton yarn. The little medallion woven at the beginning of the prayer niche could be a subtle symbol of a cross indicating the weaver's true faith. The larger medallion resembles a vase with flowers.

they make. These rugs resemble Persian rugs in design and color using soft reds, blues, and light yellow. Some of the finest examples are rugs of Saraband design. Almost all of them are woven in all sizes from scatter rugs to large sizes, always oblong in proportion. Unless one has a deep understanding of Oriental rugs he cannot tell the difference between these rugs and the finest Sarabands woven in Persia. However, Sivas is more famous for the rugs woven in the city and surrounding villages which are Turkish in every respect. They are almost always in prayer rug sizes, and are geometrical, and make use of typical Turkish colors, yellows, turquoise, orange-reds, and accents of coral.

Oblong proportion seems to be a characteristic of rugs from the eastern part of Turkey, such as Kars, Yahyali, Malatya, Konya, and Yürük. Interestingly, rugs from the western part of Turkey, to the Aegean coast, tend to be square in proportions, such as 3 feet x 4 feet, 4 feet x 5 feet, 5 feet x 6 feet, in the smaller rugs. In the larger rugs from Ushak, Hereke and Isparta they retain a similar ratio. It is not unusual to find rugs from these cities measuring 12 feet x 14 feet, 16 feet x 20 feet, or even larger rugs in similar ratio.

Kirshir is another notable example of the art of Seljuk weaving. These rugs are geometrical in spirit making strong use of orange-reds, lemon yellows, and very lovely accents of light blue and turquoise. Many of these rugs are woven in bands or stripes, a characteristic trait of some of the Turkoman Boukara weavers, reminiscent of the making of tent trappings in nomadic days.

The weavers of Bergamo have enjoyed a world reputation for their fine prayer rugs. They use more light and dark blues with less yellow than other Turkish weavers. This fact may be attributable to the still lingering Greek or Roman influences, from the days when the city was Pergamum. Most of the



weaving today is done in surrounding villages, practically none in the city. We found one home where an elderly woman showed us the last rug she would ever weave. (See p. 203) Bergamo rugs, unlike most Turkish prayer rugs, which usually have an open field of solid color, more often have star-like patterns in diagonal rows. They have an unusually long selvage at the end of the rug with colorful tassels, and almost always either a blue bead or a shell in the selvage to ward off the Evil Eye. (See p. 179) Again, they may weave a triangular shaped eye in the selvage for the same reason.

Melas rugs are somewhat easier to identify than most Turkish rugs because the whole rug takes on a cast of shades of yellow, brick, or coral red. Unquestionably they have enjoyed world reputation from the earliest times, not so much for the fineness of their work as for its exquisite composition of color, making use of earthen brown and corals. Although they are geometrical they are delicately blended, both in color and design. The ends of Melas rugs are always finished with a selvage, almost always in light coral red. The edges are over-cast with similar wool, with double edging. These rugs, too, are fast disappearing. Melas rugs are no longer woven in the city of Melas, which is ancient Mylasa. In the spring of 1966, we found a limited amount of these rugs being woven in villages surrounding Melas.

Almost all these rugs are woven to be used as prayer rugs. Very seldom are they much larger than 5 feet x 7 feet. Having been in their homes, I can understand that they could not possibly weave anything larger, for their rooms are small and cannot accommodate large looms.

One of the finest examples of Turkish weaving is Komarlu Kula. (See p. 156) Kula is the name of the city, and Komarlu, meaning black, as in coal, is used



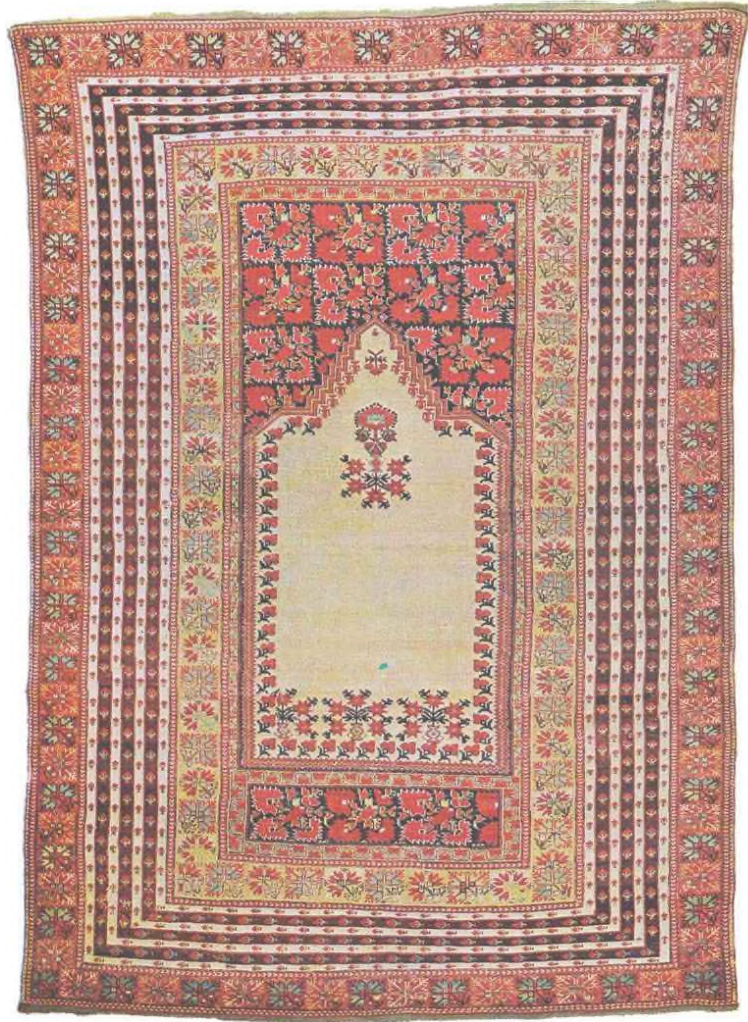
*Melas (Turkish)*

*Size 3.6 x 5.5*

*Circa 1860*

A charming example of peasant craftsmanship. This rug in most respects is woven like any Melas prayer rug except that it does not show the customary mihrab. The square central panel like the smaller panel above it are in the usual tradition of most prayer rug weavers. Could it be the weaver was Christian as evidenced by the obvious crosses in this crab-like motif? The deep red in the outer border with its fine tracery contributes immensely to the beauty of the composition. A rug similar to this one is depicted in the painting, *The Annunciation with St. Emedius*, by Carlo Crivelli, famed fifteenth century Italian painter.





*Ghiordes Prayer Rug (Turkish)*

*Size 4.10 x 6.10*

*18th Century*

A rare example of Ghiordes weaving in the finest classical sense. The blending of simple design with delicate colors gives the rug a dignity and quality only a master craftsman can conceive and complete. The inner field is plain with small lily-like motifs protruding into the field. At the base of the field design there are vases with stylized flowers. In the lower oblong cartouche and in the field above the prayer point, the weaver has interestingly interpreted the Persian fish pattern, exaggerating the scales and grouping the fishes in threes. Persian weavers always use the fishes in pairs. The two main borders and the inner border of the prayer field are composed of stylized plants. The seven stripe middle border, alternating ivory and deep brown, is a characteristic of Ghiordes weaving. The ivory is traditionally cotton. Notice the delightful inverted potted plant in the prayer point.

to indicate that the rugs are rich and dark. Some of the finest Turkish rugs in museums today were produced in this city. A majority are prayer rugs, but occasionally one finds a Kula rug of room size or larger. Kulas are not as severely geometrical as, for example, rugs from Yürük, Kirshir, or Kars. They have a little tendency toward floral design, but with a simplicity of expression. The open field is often light blue, coral, or occasionally light green. The border is usually done with lemon yellows. These rugs of lighter shades are known simply as Kula rugs.

Ghiordes rugs enjoy a world-wide reputation as some of the finest prayer rugs. They are decorative, colorful, and still carry a feeling of simplicity. Almost always the center of the rug is clear, solid color either in tans, gold, or light blue with a hanging lantern pattern. (See p. 152) The borders have from three to six parallel bands of color, using white cotton instead of wool, to highlight the little flowers woven in their bands.

Ladik rugs are very similar to Ghiordes weaving, in that they are mostly woven in prayer rug sizes. Both rugs are somewhat lighter in shading than most Turkish rugs. They also have a series of many bands of small borders. Ladiks are somewhat more elaborate in the treatment of their design, using hanging lanterns and lily-shaped designs protruding from the borders into the solid field. They also use more color in the field surrounding the niche area. Like almost all Turkish rugs these are all wool. Ladik, usually has an edging of three or four bands overcast in cotton. Although this is common with Ladik weavers, it is not a reliable test as this happens occasionally in other types of rugs as well.

Ushak rugs, perhaps more than any other rugs from Turkey, came to be known as Turkey carpets for their brilliant Turkey red background color. These





Town of Hereke, Turkey.

rugs are most decorative, for often the field of the rugs is solid red, with a medallion in the middle and a border of blue and gold. They were much sought after by people of means all over the world until as late as World War I. Now, again, they are in demand but, unfortunately, they are now scarce. In the spring of 1966, I had difficulty in finding a few families who were still making such rugs. Ushak rugs, as a rule, are woven with heavy yarn, giving the rug a loose texture. The fields are usually of the typical Ushak red, with warp threads of the same red dye, but they may use dark blue, natural tans, and yellows for the background coloring. They use very little detail in the field, which gives the rugs their bold, dramatic look. Ushak rugs are heavier in texture than most Turkish rugs. The wool takes on an unusual luster with use. 17th and 18th century Ushaks were woven much finer, with more detailed pattern than rugs of the Victorian and later periods. These rugs, too, are extremely rare.

In the Victorian era, when travel to Turkey was easier than travel to Iran, many of the Europeans were, for the first time, exposed to Oriental rugs in Turkey. Merchants and travellers were continuously bringing rugs from Istanbul to European capitals. The demand became so great that by the late 19th century exporters had established large looms in Hereke and in Ushak to make some of the largest rugs ever woven for European palaces, hotels, and private homes. Almost every home of wealth had a Turkish carpet. The Turkey red of the Ushak rugs blended marvelously with the Victorian decor, and these rugs fired the imagination of the Victorians so that almost everything in their rooms began to take on a Turkish look. I am sure some of the Seljuk or Mongol rulers would have been very much at home with the tassels, the ottomans, the divans, the harem cushions that gave a Turkish flavor to Victorian living rooms.



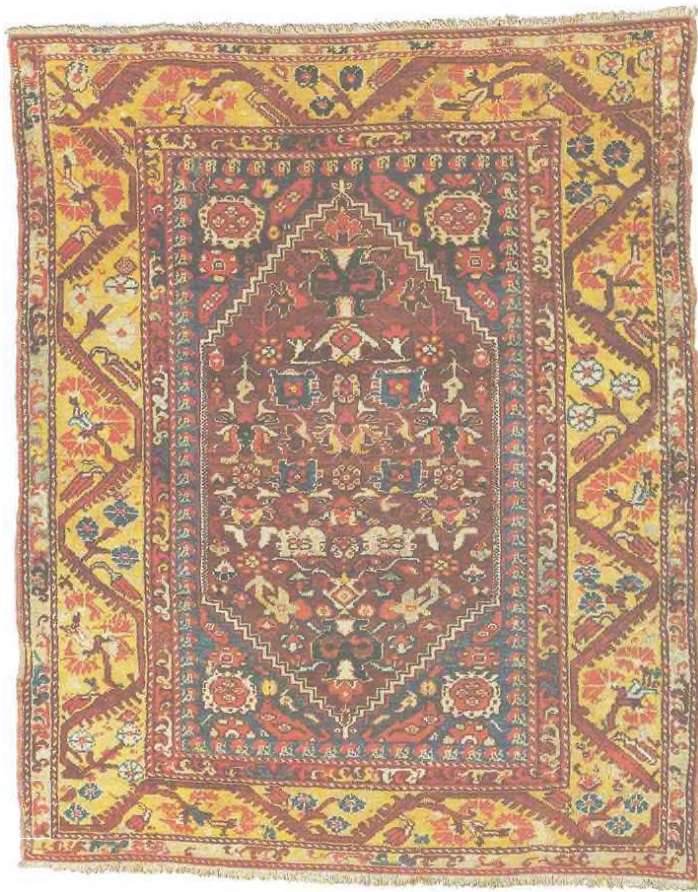
*Karaja (Azerbaijan)*

*Size 4.9 x 6.4*

*Circa 1925*

This charming rug was woven in a small village at the base of Mt. Savalan located at the northeast corner of Persia near the Caspian Sea. Karaja rugs are similar in color and design to those from the neighboring towns of Heriz, Merivan, Gorevan, Serab and Ahar, yet rugs from each town have distinctive characteristics. Karajas are woven most commonly in this size and a limited number of runners and room sizes. The design is geometrical and characteristically, as in this rug, the central polygon is somewhat rounded and set in an ivory frame. The color is primarily a deep terra cotta which ages to shades of light rust to coral. Lovely contrasts are created by accents of ivory, gold, and light and dark blue. All the dyes are of vegetable derivatives and the wool is either from the village's own sheep or is obtained by bartering with the nearby Shah Sevan tribes.





*Komarlu Kula Rug (Turkish)*

*Size 4.6 x 6*

*18th Century*

This exquisite example of Kula weaving features use of lemon yellow. The field is a rich dark brown, against which the light blue and touches of turquoise stand out in contrast, enhancing the richness of the background color. The word Komarlu means coal black, and is used to describe these rugs because of the darkness of the field. The upper and lower borders were restored more than a hundred years ago. As the rug fades, the repaired sections become more apparent. At either end of the field there is a potted plant from which spring flowers that are cleverly blended with the rest of the design. The treatment of the border design against lemon yellow is superb.

Hereke rugs in the 19th century found their way into some of the finest homes, palaces, and hotels in Europe. They could be had in large sizes as well as in small, delicately woven, extremely fine prayer rugs. Today some of the finest palaces and museums in Turkey display Hereke rugs on all their floors. Hereke rugs, like Ushak rugs, are all wool, supple and soft, but usually not as heavy or dense as Ushaks. Designs generally are floral, delicately blended and using subtle shades so that they became favorites of decorators, who used Hereke rugs with Louis XIV furniture, both in Europe and in Turkey. From earliest times all Hereke rugs had a little signature in the lower left corner, spelling out the name Hereke. Today there are still the same large looms in Hereke on which the old masterpieces were woven. Striving to find new markets for these rugs, the weavers are experimenting today. I saw a beautiful piece of workmanship on a loom in Hereke. Unfortunately, it was a copy of a sculptured Chinese rug, completely alien to Turkey and its traditions. It is sad when an ancient art turns its back upon its heritage, in an attempt to please prospective buyers.

It seems to me that the art of weaving is dying out in Turkey, except in Isparta and in Kayserai, where craftsmen are still at the looms. The weavers of Isparta rugs have deviated from the typical Seljuk type of weaving. They have continued to use a feeling and spirit of the rug weavers from Tabriz or from Kirman in Persia. They make exquisite blends of very dark and old blues, with shades of pastels in coral, yellow, or tans. Quite often the field is either dark blue, tan, or coral red with a jewel-like medallion in the center, and very little detail in the main field. Most of the rugs woven in Isparta are in room sizes or larger. However, they seldom exceed 15 feet in length. Unlike Ushak rugs, these weavers use native cotton from Izmir for the warp and weft threads, and



typically of all Oriental rugs, the nap is of local wool. The rugs take on a lovely luster with use. Isparta rugs, like Kayserai rugs, are usually quite uniform in shape. The weavers take particular pride in having their rugs symmetrical.

This chapter gives you an introduction to Turkish rugs, but by no means exhausts the subject, for there are many more rugs woven in Turkey. A knowledge and understanding of the types we have mentioned will hopefully give a deeper insight into this kind of Oriental rug about which very little authoritative information is being written. Almost all the literature on Turkish rug making deals with rare, or museum pieces, which are locked up in archives. My observations are personal. Today decorators and people with a taste for the primitive find tremendous satisfactions in decorating and living with rugs of Seljuk culture, which is colorful, gay, and primitive; these rugs are often found in well-decorated living rooms, whether traditional or modern in style.



Turkish woman painting designs on Kutaya pottery. Since the 11th Century when Persian potters introduced the art, Kutaya in central Turkey has made beautiful glazed tiles and pottery.

A Bachtari village woman spinning yarn with a top-like device which twists the wool into yarn as she feeds it.

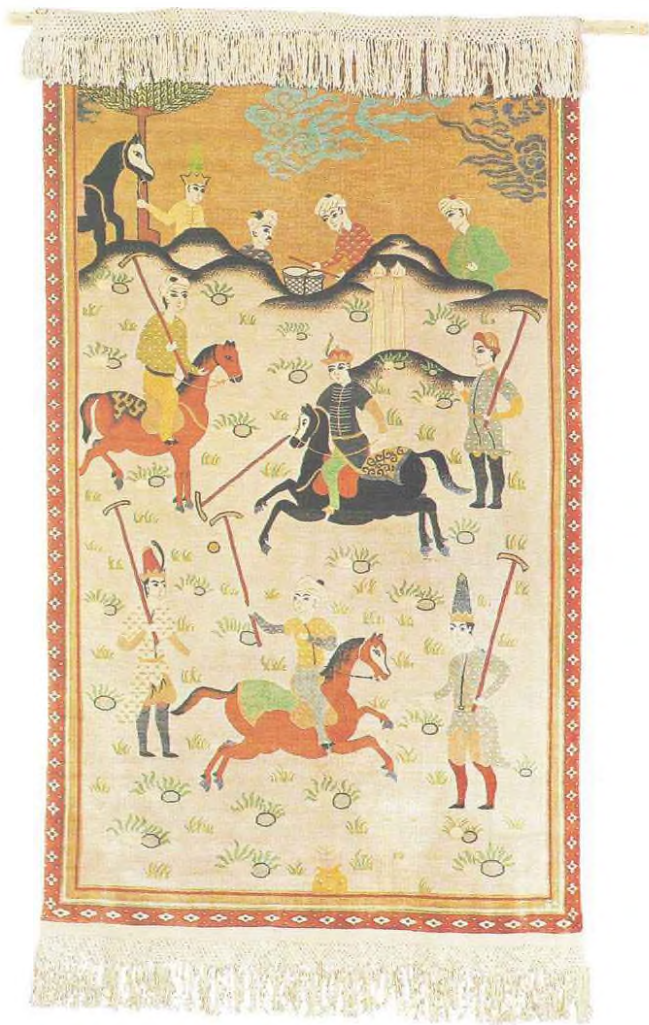


*Hereke Silk (Turkish)*

*Size 3.5 x 5.2*

*19th Century*

For many years, the weavers of Hereke were honored as the official weavers to the court in Istanbul, and their rugs such as this 19th century silk were signed in one corner with the word "Hereke" written in Arabic. This exquisite and unusual example depicts a typically Persian scene, horsemen playing polo in a *maidan* or square, most likely the famous field in Isfahan, where goal-posts similar to those in the rug still stand. Only the warm colors are typically Turkish; the design itself is modelled on the idea of a Persian miniature, with different levels to represent perspective. The drummers shown kept beat with the game in progress.





*Derebend (Caucasian)*

*Size 4.6 x 5.5*

*19th Century*

This rug was woven during the 19th century on the Caspian seacoast in Derebend, a city of the Caucasus. North and south of Derebend, down the seacoast as far as Talish, the weavers show a strong love of blue as in this example. Against this color, the star-like medallions are delightfully designed. The smaller ones are cleverly woven according to space available. Note how the two end medallions were compressed, either from lack of room or impatience to complete the rug.

## CAUCASIAN RUGS

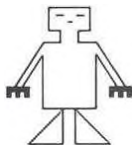
Caucasian rugs fall into three categories, those woven principally by Armenians, those made by Turkish speaking Kazaks, and a few woven by Georgians. By far the majority of Caucasian rugs are the products of Armenians.

Armenia is an ancient country, situated in the valley of Mt. Ararat, bounded by Russia in the north, Turkey and Persia in the south, the Black and Caspian Seas west and east. The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers have their source in Armenia. It is the melting snows from the Ararat range that perpetually supply the water for these rivers which cut through the arid, dry deserts of Iraq and meet at Basra, at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. The long history of Armenia is a tale of struggle for survival. Armenia fought the Greeks, the Arabs, the Mongol hordes, the Persians, the Russians, the Seljuk and Ottoman Turks. In the first decade of the fourth century Armenians who were sun-worshippers were converted to Christianity. When the Bible was translated into Armenian, using the new, invented Armenian alphabet, there began the flowering period of Ar-

menian literature. Like most ancient races, the Armenians had untold numbers of sagas, tales, stories, which were put down in writing. Church liturgy, songs, and psalms were added, and enriched the literature. Armenians have been noted as a people who have cherished arts and crafts. For centuries they have been the artists and architects of the Turks, the Persians, and the Russians. Even to this day most of the delicate crafts in the Middle East are in the hands of Armenians.

We cannot speak of Oriental rugs without giving the Armenians a fair share of credit for what they have contributed to this exciting art. Most of the rugs from Armenia are known by their place-of-origin names as Kazaks, Shirvans, Karabaghs, Derebends, or Chichi Kubas. They are often loosely referred to as Daghestan rugs, which in Turkish means "Mountainous Country," an indefinite terminology for any rugs from the Caucasus.

Almost all the Armenian rugs are semi-geometrical in their design treatment, and occasionally conventionalized. Rugs from the central part of Armenia are of small size, and those from Derebend, and particularly from Karabagh, are oblong, very seldom exceeding 5 feet in width or 15 feet in length. All the material used in the rugs is wool except the weft threads and the edging, which are often cotton. The wool warp threads are spun in varied shades of greys and browns making what will become the fringe an interesting mixture. Armenian rugs are woven firmly with the nap clipped very low, making the rug supple and soft. A great preference is shown by these people for delicate shades of soft blue, touches of green, coral, old gold, and tans. All the patterns are outlined in either natural brown or wool dyed to this shade. After fifty or seventy-five years of wear, the dyed brown wool will wear so that it appears deep and recessed. One should







A Turkoman weaver working on a Boukara rug.



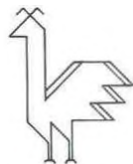
Every great holiday or occasion for celebration in Iran provides an opportunity for the people to display their most highly prized possessions—their rugs.

A street scene in Bergamo, Turkey.



not be alarmed as this color is very little used. The weavers know that with time this color will wear faster than the rest, so they outline the motifs with it, giving the pattern an embossed effect which further heightens the design. This is a characteristic feature of all the Armenian rugs from the Caucasus, Kazak rugs from further north, and some rugs from Kars, Konya, and Kirshir. The secret of this technique is that the dyers use iron pyrite in dyeing the wool, which hastens the drying out of the yarn so that it breaks down sooner than the rest. If iron ore is not available, the same results can be obtained by excessive boiling of the wool in preparation for dyeing.

Ganji and Karabagh rugs are of scatter size, measuring  $4\frac{1}{2} \times 8$  feet, sometimes somewhat larger. Occasionally they are woven as oblong runners. (See p. 172.) Many of the smaller rugs are woven as prayer rugs. (See p. 167.) Usually the prayer rugs have a design shaped like a doorway at one end of the rug, which indicates the direction in which the rug is to be laid when a devout Muslim uses it for prayer. In geometrically designed rugs this prayer point or niche is usually angular; in floral rugs it is arched or dome shaped. The fields of most of the prayer rugs are usually covered with *badam* or Saraband designs, or with stylized trees with extended branches, which are interestingly woven to give the pattern a diagonal effect. (See p. 167.) If the pattern does not quite come out even when they reach the inside borders of the rug, they simply cut the design short. The prayer rugs usually have dark blue, light gold, or ivory backgrounds. Daghestans not woven as prayer rugs generally have a series of three large, similar medallions, a touch of Yürük influence. The medallions are bold, full of interesting detail. They weave small animals in the field of the rug and also representations of



*Daghestan Prayer Rug (Caucasian)*

*Size 3.5 x 4.3*

*Dated 1201 A.H. (about 1785 A.D.)*

A rare piece of craftsmanship. The main figure is a royal personage, to judge from his crown and jewelled sword. There are delicate touches of lavender silk on the horse and rider. If the other animal is meant to be a deer, the story illustrated is probably that of Bahram Gur, the famous Persian huntsman. The portrayal is delightfully childish and primitive in spirit. It is interesting to compare the awkward treatment of the "realistic" figures with the easy grace of the more natural stick figure animals which are included wherever space permits. The date in the upper corner is 1201 A.H., about 1785 A.D.



different members of the family. They are truly delightful examples of untutored folk art, which is childishly spontaneous and pleasant.

Shirvan rugs are similar in treatment, with the exception that Shirvan rugs are somewhat more geometrical in design, using large dragon-like motifs in the field and quite often alternating with large geometrical rosettes, somewhat similar to the *gul* patterns found in Turkoman rugs. Shirvan has traditionally used lavender coloring with not too much success. It usually has faded to a very light grayish-pink. If you were to turn these rugs over and examine the backs, you would find the original deep coloring. These rugs are delicate in appearance and well balanced in color.

Another rug, very similar, is woven in Georgia, a neighboring country located between Armenia and the Black Sea. Here they make a type of rug which is very similar in every aspect to Daghestan and Shirvan rugs. It is very difficult to tell this rug from an Armenian Daghestan. The only distinguishing characteristic is that the Armenian Daghestan has a single cotton overcast edging in natural color. The Daghestan made in Georgia has an edging of three strands of warp threads, overcast together with blue cotton threads. The use of orange is quite common with weavers of Georgi Daghestan, whereas Armenian weavers seldom use this color.

Karabagh means in Turkish *Black Gardens*. These rugs are an interesting mixture of several cultures, with Armenian predominating. This Province has been a buffer state, situated as it is on the only main road on the Caspian side of the Caucasus. For centuries it has been the strategic gateway for conquering nations to possess. For long periods of time it was ruled by Greeks, Arabs, Mongols, Russians, Persians, and Armenians. The rugs are an interesting mixture



*Dagstan Prayer Rug (Caucasian)*

*Size 3.6 x 5.4*

*19th Century*

A classical example of Dagstan weaving, using the famous repeated, stylized tree pattern. Each design symbolizes a small tree with two extended branches with the fruit or blossoms on top. Variations in the design result from its having been woven by different members of the family at different times. They enjoyed the fun of weaving in their barnyard animals many with six or more legs as space permitted.

Stylized combs on both sides of the prayer niche are symbols of clean or devout Muslims. It is entirely of fine grade local wool with the exception of the weft threads and the selvaqe on both ends of the rug which are finished in cotton.





*Ganji (Armenian)*

*Size 3.10 x 12*

*Dated 1859*

This magnificent piece of craftsmanship must have been woven especially for an Armenian church. The main border motifs are composed of a series of decorative crosses. In the interlaced medallions of the main field crosses appear again. The rug transmits the effect of a mosaic tile. The weaver very cleverly arranged the main motif in such a fashion that the small medallions diagonally give the effect of stripes of yellow, blue, green and red. Also the weaver took the liberty of inserting a message in Armenian in the upper left-hand corner, carrying his writing over into the top coral border.

When the rug was completed the weaver added one more border to work in the date and his name.

of all these influences. At a quick glance a Karabagh rug would show Chinese influence in design and Persian in coloring. (See p. 65) Usually, the borders are composed of a series of rosettes, a characteristic motif used in Samarcand or Khoton, while the field is typically Persian and Caucasian, well blended. Or again, another type of Karabagh shows a strong Turkoman influence, with accents of lemon yellow and touches of pomegranate reds. (See p. 168) In the late nineteenth century, unfortunately, these weavers started making large French roses in the background design of their rugs. These designs are commonly referred to in Persia as *guli-faranghi*, French or European flowers. The introduction of this alien baroque motif is most inconsistent with the native Karabagh art, and strikes a discordant note for people who enjoy unspoiled authentic design. Karabagh weavers, like most weavers from Armenia, are extremely fond of all shades of blue. Therefore, it is quite common to find rugs from this area predominately blue. Another interesting note about Karabagh rugs is that the weavers occasionally use sumac orange color in the geometrical borders on a white or ivory field and sometimes for accents in the field. This color is intense and fortunately not too much of it is used; it does not soften with time. All the colors in Caucasian rugs are fast, except for this orange color, which will always bleed. If you have a rug of this type and examine it closely, you may not find the bleeding on the surface of the rug, but you will see it on the reverse side.

Another type of rug woven in the Caucasus is made in Baku, a seaport town on the Caspian Sea. Most of these rugs are woven as *kenares* or runners. Because they have a strong similarity to rugs from Karabagh they are commonly sold under that name. It is difficult for an amateur to distinguish them, for they

are so similar in both texture and proportions. There are a few characteristics by which they may be identified. Like the weavers of Khatchli Boukaras, the weavers of Baku seem always to fold back the selvage at the beginning of the rug and leave a long fringe at the other end. If they choose to use a medallion they will use either one large one in the center, or three in a series, and weave small *badam* designs in the field. Again, quite commonly, they will use a series of *badam* designs placed across the field to give a strong diagonal pattern. Usually the field design is quite narrow and as much space is used for borders as for field. In density the rugs are about the thickness and firmness of Karabags, heavier than Shirvans and Kubastan, but not as dense as Kazaks.

Soumak or Shamakha is another important rug woven in the Caucasus, west of Baku. These rugs are actually woven in the town of Shamakha. Almost every Oriental rug is ascribed to the city, town, tribe, or province from which it comes. But in this case the name in current use does not in any way indicate the source of origin. Many people, even dealers, are of the erroneous opinion that these rugs are woven in Cashmere. I believe that the early merchants, both in this country and in Europe, gave this more romantic-sounding name to the rug, rather than using the less attractive name of the town of its actual origin. Perhaps they were also recognizing the fact that these rugs are woven in a completely different manner from other rugs. (See p. 99.) The loom is set up just as it is for other rugs, but instead of tying knots to form pile, the weaver uses a needle, and passes the strands of wool over a cluster of warp threads, back under a portion of them, repeating this and taking up other threads, to form a flat, embroidered surface similar to the decorative selvage work on Turkoman, Belouch, Afghan, and some Shiraz rugs. When the weaver finishes with a certain color, she simply leaves



*Belouch (Afghanistan)*

*Size 7 x 11*

*Circa 1885*

A superb antique Belouch of exceptional scale and size. The few that exceed 6 x 9 are usually woven in two pieces and later joined but this one is all one piece. The soft lustrous wool, ornamental selvages and muted brilliant colors are all typical of antique Belouch weaving as is the compartmentalized geometric design.

The weaver shows creative sensibility in use of lavender with orange and browns.





*Chichi Kubastan Runner    Size 3.9 x 11.2    18th Century    (Caucasian)*

This is one of the finest examples of Caucasian weaving. Fortunately, it is in excellent condition. In the process of weaving this rug, the weaver must have run short of wool more than a dozen times. Each time a new batch was dyed, it varied in color a bit, giving the background blue a different cast. Notice the central motif, which is a tree of life planted in a coral pot. Smaller trees with extended branches are scattered on the field. The outer border which uses a series of four simple rosettes is more common to Soumak and kilim weaving. The main border is a typical Chichi creation.

the thread hanging on the back of the rug, and starts with another. The backs of these rugs are consequently shaggy in appearance. They are similar to other Caucasian rugs in design and color. The rugs are usually woven with two or three medallions. The field is covered with small geometrical motifs. My belief is that this type of weaving preceded the knotted, pile weaving that we know as Oriental rug technique. This is the type of workmanship which primitive, nomadic people still use to decorate all their hand-made utility items, from tent coverings to garments, blouses or sheepskin coats. The women weavers like this attractive embroidery so much that nothing they weave or sew seems finished to them without some touches of it.

Derebend (in Turkish, *A Fortified Gate* and in Persian, *Darband*, see Glossary) is another historical city in the Caucasus, situated on the main road between Russia and Persia, by the Caspian Sea. The control of this city meant the control of the main pass for traffic north and south. It has changed hands as often as other cities in the Caucasus, and has been one of the best fortified of cities of the area. The weavers from Derebend use the same technique, material, and dyes as their neighbors in the Caucasus. Again, like the rest, the rugs are all wool and small in size, very seldom exceeding 5 by 8 feet. The rugs are geometrical in design, usually composed of a series of three or four medallions in a central field. Again the use of ivory and many shades of blue is preferred.

Kazak, which in Turkish means *Man without A Master*, or *Adventurer*, is the general name for a group of tribes now inhabiting Kazakstan and Sinkiang. There are eleven separate *voiskas*, tribes or settlements, Don, Kuban, Terek, Astrakhan, Ural, Orenburg, Siberian, Semirychenska, Amur, Usuri, and Zabaykayle. From ancient times almost all these families have been weaving rugs with

strong family resemblances, all called Kazak rugs. These rugs, perhaps more than any others, have brought Caucasian rugs to the attention of the rest of the world. They are the finest examples of nomadic folk art which has remained for centuries in its pure, indigenous state. Their rugs are bold in design and severely geometrical, usually composed of one large medallion or several medallions in a series. The field is open, usually solid, strong shades of blues, reds, natural ivories, or yellows. They are usually woven in scatter sizes, seldom exceeding 5 by 10 feet.

The Kuban tribe makes some of the finest Kazak rugs. In the thirteenth century this Turkic speaking Kazak tribe was part of the Golden Horde. They remained in Russia and Poland where many became Christians and took on a veneer of Polish culture as well as Polish family names. Because of their war-like nature they were continuously plundering, pillaging, and robbing Russian cities. In 1775, in the reign of Catherine the Great, they became so menacing that Catherine mobilized the whole Russian army to subdue them and put them in boats on the Black Sea to travel to distant and uninhabited parts of the northern Caucasus. They were scattered on several million acres, with their major settlement at Kuba. This was a happy solution for Catherine and for the Kazaks as well, for they were back in their ancestral area.

Warriors of the Kuban and Don tribes have shown remarkable valor in all Russian campaigns. They harassed and slaughtered Napoleon's retreating army near Moscow. Later they outsmarted and outfought Hitler's mechanized army on several occasions with their swift horses and their traditional sabers.

These fierce warriors and fine craftspeople were dispersed after World War II. They do no more weaving but their love of color and dramatic use of design continue to delight those who are fortunate enough to find and appreciate the rugs they created.



*Volga Kazak (Caucasian)*

*Size 6 x 7*

*Circa 1850*

This is an excellent example of weaving done by Volga Kazaks who freely roamed from Astrakan at the mouth of the Volga River to Kazan in the far north, wherever the land held greater promise for them. Looking at this rug one can almost feel the vibration of the hooves of the thousands of horses of these fine horsemen as they ride at full gallop, shouting, singing and performing all sorts of dare-devil tricks. There is an art form peculiar to them in its bold simplicity, pure geometrical design and color blending. Truly a delightful piece of craftsmanship.



One closing note on all Caucasian rugs. They are woven with a spirit of spontaneity, and have been the product of isolated or inaccessible weavers who have never come under the dominance or influence of commercial interests. All the rugs from the Caucasus are extremely scarce in the market and have become prizes for collectors. They are found almost only in private homes and museums. Possibly there are more in New England homes than anywhere else in the world. Most of these were brought here by Yankee clipper ships in the late nineteenth century.

Historically, rugs from the Caucasus and Asia Minor have played a particularly interesting role in the interplay of commerce and culture between Asia and Europe. They were among the first items to be brought from the Middle East into Europe by returning Crusaders and, in greater numbers, by traders, especially by Armenian merchants. Armenian chronicles give fascinating accounts of the beginnings of their trade with Europe as early as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. One recounts how Armenians fled from Cilicia, in Asia Minor, in the twelfth century before the invading hordes of Tartars and Egyptians. They settled in the Netherlands, and the account adds that the Dutch gave the Armenians permission to sell rugs before the door of the church in Bruges in 1345. Other chronicles tell how the Armenians, from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, exported Turkish, Caucasian, and Persian products, on a regular basis, to the Low Countries. By 1645 they had well-established trading centers in Smyrna (Izmir), Italy, France, and Spain. Another group of Armenians in New Julfa, outside Isfahan, dealt almost exclusively in Persian goods with the Dutch East India Company. By 1650, Armenians had established a thriving business in Amsterdam, importing diamonds and pearls, rugs and other works of art from

*Shusha Kazak (Caucasian)*

*Size 4.9 x 9.2*

*Circa 1800*

This rug is truly an achievement in combining the basic feeling for color and design of the major Caucasian ethnic groups. It has the boldness of the Kazak, the spirit of playfulness of the Cherkes, the symbolism of the Kazak and the color preference of the Armenians. The large medallions stand sharp and bold, yet subdued by the small, detailed patterns of sharp-shooting medals with typical double-headed Russian eagles, symbolic trees that appear to be copied from Erebuni wall-paintings and small stars. This rug has small amounts of the original Armenian lavender found in textiles of this area ever since the eighth century. The dyes and the wool are all indigenous and have mellowed beautifully.



the East. Europeans of culture, both the old aristocratic families and the rising middle class, were quick to recognize the beauty of the Caucasian, Turkish, and Persian rugs which were among the most important items of this thriving trade. They must have enjoyed living with them as much as you and I, for they used them in the decoration of their homes, not at first on the floors, but on the wall, the tables, over chairs or on couches. Painters of the Renaissance period incorporated them into their work, catching the colors, designs, and textures on their canvasses. They built them into the total design of their paintings, as Holbein did, for example, in his painting, "The Ambassadors," which hangs in London's National Gallery. A beautiful Bergamo rug, with exquisite border design of little starry polygons, and an open field with one or two medallions, holds the very center of the composition, tying together the varied elements of the total design. Yet, as is so often the case, in describing this canvas, Philip Hendy in the volume, *Art Treasures of the National Gallery*, describes every other element of the composition, but never mentions the central one, the rug.

Is it not a pity that in the twentieth century, with such vast knowledge as we possess, we are no more knowledgeable and perhaps less appreciative than was the Renaissance man, of the East's highly individualized, personal and yet anonymous contribution to the artistic wealth of the world?





*Shah Sevan Rug (Azerbaijan-Persia)*

*Size 3.3 x 9*

*Contemporary*

The Shah Sevan (Lovers of the Shah) tribes are Turkic speaking people located throughout Persian Azerbaijan, mostly northeast of Tabriz. They weave colorful, flat-woven rugs such as these today. The flat-weave is covered with heavy embroidery representing camels, horses, goats, lions, people and roosters arranged around and among geometric medallions.

## TURKOMAN RUGS

The Mongol hordes, a conglomeration of loosely joined tribes and clans united by Jenghiz-Khan, exploded out of Central Asia in the early thirteenth century. Within thirty-five years they laid a claim on world leadership. From contemporary sources we know that there was great confusion in the minds of Europeans as to who these terrifying invaders actually were. They appeared on the scene, out of mysterious Central Asia, at the time when Europeans in sizeable groups were travelling for the first time toward the East on the Crusades. Some Crusaders during the Second Crusade believed them to be Nestorian Christians, led by King David, coming to the assistance of the Christian armies. The crusading zealot, Jacques de Vitry, Bishop of Ptolmais, conjectured that they were led by Prester John. Europeans soon came to think of them as barbarians, short of legs, long of bodies, swarthy, ruthless, and invincible. In successive waves from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, they overran China, Korea, India, Persia, Anatolia, and Central Europe as far as the gates of Vienna and north to Poland.



*Ganji (Caucasian)    Size 4 x 12    Circa 1880*

This diagonal arrangement is classically Ganji. The wool from this area is unusually rich in lanolin; with age and constant use, the rug takes on a rich luster and since the dyes are organic, time makes them more beautiful rather than less.



*Kula (Turkish)    4.4 x 11.8    19th Century*

A rare old Turkish *saph* prayer rug woven near the Aegean seacoast. Although the colors in the rug stand out brilliantly still, the rug has seen much use as a prayer rug, and certain niches show much more use than others. It is a fine example of how the Seljuk artistic tradition has been maintained over the centuries by the Seljuk's descendants.



*Tekke Turkoman      Size 7 x 11      Circa 1850*

A jewel-toned example of Turkoman weaving at its best, this Tekke employs only the finest, most lustrous wool and a harmonious range of ever-changing muted colors. The many different dye-lots give the effect of watered silk and offset the rigidity of the simple *gul* pattern. Although the basic color is an orange-red of henna derivation, plum-colored cochineal red has been used in each *gul*'s center for added richness. Note the charming difference of scale between the aprons of design at each end.



Their power extended from the Mediterranean to the Pacific, from Siberia to the Himalayas. Across this vast area they roamed on their sturdy, shaggy ponies and swift horses from country to country and from continent to continent, with the same freedom and ease with which sea-going nations roamed the oceans. Self-sufficient and fearless, they trained and maintained a formidable army.

Their methods of conquest and of subjugation deserve mention here because of their effects upon the history of the arts and crafts of both Europe and Asia. Artisans of all sorts—weavers, dyers, jewelry makers—flourished principally in cities. When the Mongols conquered such cities as Samarcand or Kandahar, Boukhara or Tabriz, Rayy or Peking, Kiev or Krakow, they followed a pattern of destruction well documented in contemporary accounts. When Samarcand, a center of Persian culture, was captured in 1221, for example, the Mongol leaders sent word to the commanders of the city that they were going to take a census of population in different categories. All craftsmen, including weavers, architects, stone masons, metal workers, and all scholars, soothsayers, and astrol-ogers were to gather on one hill outside the city. All the strong young men were to assemble on another hill, and the young, good-looking women on a third. Then the soldiers were sent through the city to slaughter the remainder of the people. To be certain not a living soul remained, the course of the nearby river was diverted to run through the city, destroying it completely. The young women were given to the soldiers as booty, and the young men were used for building fortifications and performing other labors required for the next conquest. The craftsmen and artisans, however, were preserved to enrich the lives of the conquerors. On this occasion the lives of thirty-thousand craftsmen were spared. This pattern was repeated over and over.



Turkoman *gul* designs.

To the Mongol invasions and conquests we may trace other memorable results. Rayy, a Persian city archaeologically famous for its pottery and other artifacts, was similarly destroyed in the early thirteenth century. A handful of people escaped and returned to the site of their ruined town with the hope of rebuilding it. However, the devastation was so great that they went instead to another, much smaller town seven miles to the north, and here they set about rebuilding their homes and picking up their lives again. In time this second town grew to become the largest city of modern Iran, its capital, Teheran. Of greater importance, culturally, were the effects of the forced migration of craftsmen, scientists, and intellectuals upon the minds and artistic creations of people in both Europe and Asia. The Mongols, bent on war, unwittingly gave great impetus to the beginnings of the Renaissance in Europe and indelibly set their mark upon the future artistic expressions of the people of Anatolia, India, Afghanistan, parts of Persia and Eastern Europe.

During the Russian conquest in the thirteenth century there was an unusual interchange of craftsmen. The Russian bishops and princes redeemed from the Mongols craftsmen such as smiths, potters, carpenters, tailors, cobblers, and weavers. These craftsmen were given special honors and were settled on princely and monastic estates, enjoying a unique social status in Russian society to the extent that taxes were not levied upon them. But the Mongols were quick to recognize the excellence of the indigenous craftsmen of Russia who excelled in the arts of making cloisonné enamel, jewelry, and fine filigree. Great numbers of the Russian craftsmen were sent back to Central Asia to work for the pleasure of the Mongol lords. As a result, Russia was almost depleted of her craftsmen in these fields. However, Russia to this day has been the heir to the artistic contribution of the Mongol invaders.

*Kazvin (Persian)*

*Size 4.9 x 7.3*

Kazvin has been famous traditionally for its rugs, but very few are now woven in the city. Most of the rugs sold today as Kazvins are actually made in Hamadan. The field is deep orange red with generous use of tile blue. An interesting band of floral design within the field softens the contrast and makes an easy transition to the central medallion. Kazvins make generous use of ivory. Today they weave more rugs with ivory fields than they do with red. The wools are silky and resilient. The texture is a little more dense than most Persian rugs. Nevertheless in fine rugs such as this one, the design is sharp and clear.



The term *Turkoman* today is used very broadly to include the work of the many tribes and the people who are the ethnic and cultural heirs of the ancient Mongols. Rugs, known loosely as Turkoman rugs, share certain common characteristics. They are geometrical in design, bold and severe, using all wool for warp and weft, as well as for knotting the pile. This is to be expected from a nomadic people wholly dependent on their sheep for their material. Only weavers who live more or less settled lives in cities or towns, and practice farming so that they can raise cotton or flax, have vegetable fibers for use in the warp or weft of their rugs. Almost all Turkoman rugs use shades of red, from deepest mulberry to softest coral. Notable exceptions to this generalization are the rugs from Samarcand and the area nearby. Samarcand rugs have strong Persian feeling in their design and strong Chinese and Persian influence in their coloring and design. (See p. 73) Rugs from Samarcand and Khoton are the only rugs from Central Asia that have remained multi-colored, using predominantly yellow with secondary colors of light blue and shades of orange. At first glance they appear to be the work of Chinese weavers. All other rugs from this area are predominantly dark red with touches of light and dark blue, ivory, and occasional accents of yellow within the smaller designs.

One of the most important families of Turkoman rugs is the Boukara group. These rugs are quite different in coloring and design from any other Oriental rug, and they are perhaps the easiest to identify. (See p. 182) These weavers generally use some shade of rich red, occasionally with blue or ivory for background coloring. The field is covered with a series of large, octagonal shaped motifs. This motif is referred to by the native weavers as a *gul*, meaning a flower. (See p. 189) The word has the same meaning in Turkish, but in Per-





*Kuba (Caucasian)    Size 4 x 13    Circa 1800*

An exquisite piece of craftsmanship. The jewel-like medallions give a stained-glass effect. Each medallion is a complete picture in itself. In each medallion, besides the floral extensions from the center there are also four outstretched hands. The meaning of this gesture I am sure only the weaver knows. It is not found anywhere else. Although the main border design treatment is most unusual. The series of interlocking "S" figures is the representation of graceful swans much used in this area. (See plates 95 and 96.) The field detail is typically Caucasian with barnyard motifs commonly used in rugs and in embroidery. Both ends of the rug for about six inches have been restored.

sian it also means a rose. In between the rows of the larger motifs there are usually smaller designs of the same geometrical type which are again quite uniform.

It is a common characteristic of all Boukara weavers to add a little extra embellishment by way of either an extra border on the end, or an extra-wide selvage. The border is woven similarly to the rug, whereas the selvage is woven flat, without nap. This flat weaving may extend from a few inches to a foot or more beyond the regular weaving, and quite often exquisite embroidery is worked into it.



Turkoman *gul* designs.

In the Boukara family there are several types. Yomud weaves (See p. 182) are extremely fine, oblong in shape, with the typical Boukara selvage, and two distinctive Yomud characteristics. The design, although using the basic *gul* pattern, is not as defined an octogan in shape as it commonly is in other Boukaras. The motif is somewhat elongated with a little more detail around each one, as in the rug pictured. Secondly, Yomuds as a rule use less brilliant reds in their coloring. Yomud reds have a tendency to mahogany or brownish shades, and when they age they take on a brick-brown cast.

Khatchli Boukaras (See p. 190) have a basic background color of deep red, and again characteristically are woven with detailed embellishment of deep selvages and long fringe. Usually, at the beginning of the rug, the Khatchli weaver starts with a strip of flat weaving. When the rug is completed, the weaver doubles this strip under the rug and sews it there, leaving the rug with no fringe at the beginning end, but with a wide selvage and long fringe at the opposite end of the rug. Khatchli rugs do not have a detailed series of octagons, but rather use for the central motif a large cross, filled with small geometrical details. These rugs are usually woven as prayer rugs, and have a little niche indicating the prayer point, on the

*Tekke Turkoman "Khatchli"*

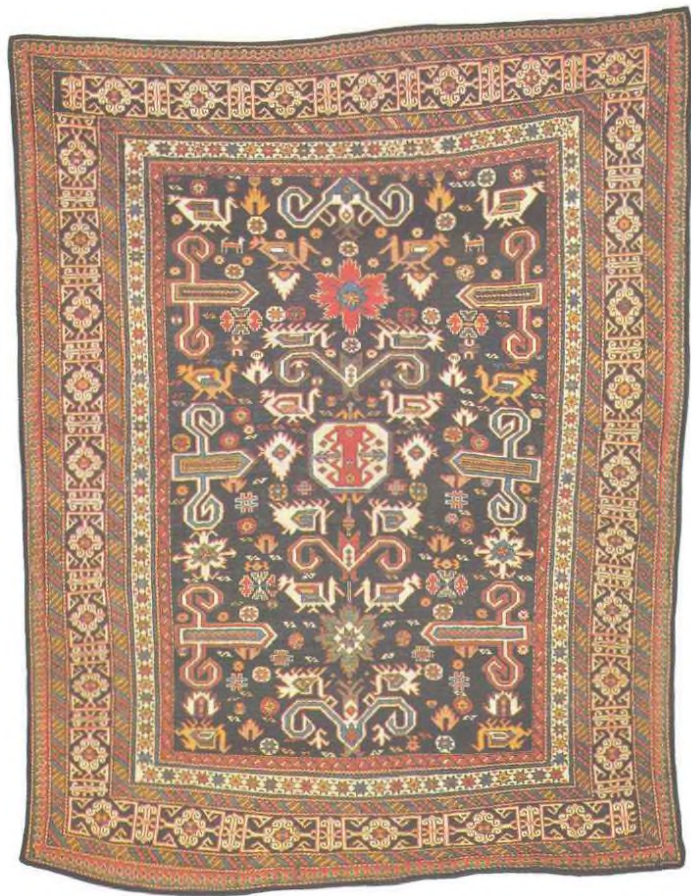
*Size 3.10 x 4.8*

*19th Century*

The "Khatchli" or cross-motif Turkoman (Khatch is Armenian for cross, and is the name Armenian dealers gave to this type of Turkoman rug) is a type of design woven by several different Turkoman tribes. Called by them *pardch* or curtain, it is woven to hang in the door of the tent, doubling as a prayer rug when the need arises. This classic example woven by the Tekke Turkomans is extremely fine in weave and detail. The panels, which echo the wooden panels of the door over which it is hung, also appear like sections of a formal oriental garden. Traditionally, one end of the rug has an extra "apron" of design, while the top has a flat-woven selvage, to which the ropes for hanging were attached. Of all the various types of Turkoman weaving, the Tekke is the most intricate, finely woven and supple, as can be seen from this example.







*Chichi (Caucasian)*

*Size 4 x 5.3*

*19th Century*

This is a rare example of early nineteenth-century Armenian Caucasian weaving. Like most Caucasian rugs, it is full of human interest. The center medallion (called a *gul*) is surrounded by four swan-necked peacocks which face each other and seem to be pecking for food. This bird-motif is repeated throughout the design of the rug. The birds are always in pairs facing each other. The small crosses with double horizontal bars represent the cross of the Russian Orthodox Church—they are used in Russian textiles, ceramics, medallions and porcelain. The T-shaped figures (sometimes called ram's horns) which line the right and left borders of the rug may often be seen embroidered on the vestments of the priests of the Armenian and Russian Orthodox Churches. Near the top of the rug, two very small goats stand facing each other, a charming expression of the weaver's desire to include his pet animal just before he finished the main design. This rug is truly a collector's item to be treasured by those who appreciate fine folk-art.

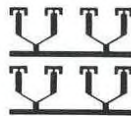


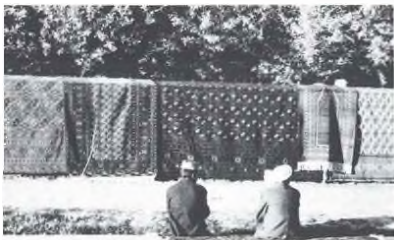
upright arm of the cross. The use of the cross undoubtedly was Armenian in its origin, as is indicated by the fact that in Armenian *khatch* means cross. There were many Christians among the Mongols centuries before mass conversion to Islam was carried out. The motif persisted to be used by Muslim weavers.

Tekke Boukaras are perhaps the finest woven and most meticulous in composition of any rugs from this area. They are so densely and firmly woven it is almost impossible to force a needle into one without the aid of pliers. Some of the finest saddle covers of Mongol and Turkoman chieftans were woven by Tekke weavers. (See p. 189.) When woven for saddle covers, the designs are usually a series of parallel borders, to be consistent with other trappings which are similarly woven.

Tekke Boukaras are usually small in size, seldom exceeding 8 x 10 feet. They make exquisite use of the *gul* design on fields of red, shading from bright cranberry to crimson. These rugs are so exquisitely woven that they take on a quality of opalescence. A characteristic of these rugs in their original state, is an apron of pile weaving extending beyond the design of the rug for from 6 inches to 2 feet, depending upon the size of the rug. This apron carries a pattern of its own, not related to the main pattern. Usually there are little flower-like petals or small geometrical ornaments arranged in diagonal order. A small, flat-woven selvage, with additional decoration in small embroideries, completes the rug. Unfortunately, there are few Tekkes today which have retained all their original and characteristic embellishments. I have seen hundreds where neglect has resulted in the complete or partial destruction of the selvage and apron.

Some of the most interesting saddle bags, horse trappings, tent ornaments and bags of all sorts (See p. 195) are made by the Boukara weavers. These





Afghan rugs in Kabul.

articles are as exquisitely woven as any rugs, with the same patient love and industry expended upon the work, even if it is only a *juval* (camel saddle-bag) to be used to transport grain or food-stuff. These weavers lavishly adorn their articles with tassels. Their products are the most colorful made in the east, warm and rich in their color blends, bold and masculine in designs. Even after decades of the hardest use they keep their lovely radiance, for oil rich wool takes on added luster, and the vegetable dyes mellow and grow more beautiful. Turkoman weavers are mostly women, and they make their own wearing apparel just as colorfully and richly decorated. They create the most fantastic hair-do's with coins, shells, colored yarns, and coral beads worked into their arrangements sometimes a foot and a half high. They adorn themselves with massive jewelry, often braided into their hair. Decorative braids are often as long as the woman is tall. Of all the Oriental people perhaps none are so fond of color, tassels, embroidery, heavy jewelry and rich decoration of themselves, their animals, and their tents, as are these nomadic descendants of the ancient Mongols.

Rugs made by the Afghans, although not actually in the Turkoman group, must be mentioned here because they are similar to others made by the Boukara family of weavers. They are generally finely woven and the characteristic *gul* motifs are larger. It is interesting to note that there was no such country as Afghanistan until 1747 when it became a separate and independent country after the death of Nadir Shah, the famous Persian King. The origin of the Afghans is uncertain. Some early historians believed them to be related to the tribes of Israel, a theory widely accepted even in recent times. Others traced their descent from the Copts of Egypt. It seems certain, however, that the ancestors of these people came under the successive influence of Greek, Arab, Mongol, Persian, and

*Heriz (Azerbaijan)*

*Size 5 x 8*

*Circa 1920*

A magnificent example of craftsmanship by isolated village folk who live in Persia's mountainous northwest. The design is geometrical in spirit, primitive in character. The wool is from the sheep in the valley and the dyes are local. The ivory wool was steeped in fermented soumac fruit, giving it a golden warmth. The brick red field color is obtained from henna, a color much used here not only for dyeing wool, but also for hair, beards and fingernails. The design is a childish attempt to achieve a floral effect.





Turkoman *Torba* or water bottle container.

Seljuk conquerors. From the kinds of rugs they weave we may deduce that the influence of the Mongol invaders was strong, for their work bears such striking similarity to others in the Turkoman family.

There are a large number of other types of Boukara rugs, Khiva, Ersari, Beshir, Salors, Saryks. Because of long Persian domination and influence, these rugs, although products of Turkoman weaving using the same Turkoman flair for color, have taken on a somewhat Persian influence in their designs. It is quite common to find Ersari and Beshir weavers using the Fereghan motif for their main designs, shaped and patterned to meet their own requirements which are dictated by their nomadic taste.

Most people who think of Boukara rugs are really thinking of those made in Khiva, which are classical examples of Turkoman weaving. It is possible that these weavers influenced the weavers of Afghan, too, for their rugs are very similar. Khiva weavers use a series of octagons in the main field, with open space around them, and intricate geometrical motifs in the borders. Traditionally they have a long flat woven, kilim like selvage, usually embroidered in parallel bars of other colors used in the rug, predominantly red and blue. Khiva and Beshir rugs usually are woven in room-size proportions. Khiva retains its pure nomadic, simple design, and these weavers maintain proportions of 7 x 10 feet or 8 x 12 feet. Beshir rugs are highly influenced by Persian design. It is common to see a Beshir rug with a Fereghan pattern in the main field, and with some accents of gold both in the main design and in the border pattern. Beshir rugs are long and narrow in proportion, usually in the ratio of 7 x 14 feet or 8 x 20 feet. Ersari, Salors, and Saryks weavers make small, finely woven pieces for the most part—saddle bags, tent trappings, wall hangings, and prayer rugs from the smallest



*Turkoman Saddlebags*

These two tent bags are of Turkoman origin. The top one was woven by Salor Turkomans and the bottom one by Yomud Turkomans. These, and other Turkoman tribes inhabit the area between Sarakh in Persia and Rudkhaneh in Afghanistan. Here many streams converge and the Amu Darya river has its source. The repeated "Gul" or flower motif, typically fine and detailed in the Salor is just as typically bold in the Yomud. Similarly, the deep liver brown is as classic in the Yomud as the lighter cherry red color is of Salor weaving. Both examples employ the rich, hard-wearing lustrous wool of the Karakul sheep.





Turkoman faces.

mat sizes to 5 x 7 feet. Their work is typically Turkoman in design and coloring.

The Belouchi tribes extend from Persia into Afghanistan and to Turkestan. They have many cultural ties with the weavers of Central Asia and Afghanistan. Like the weavers of Boukara rugs they, too, adorn their work with tassels, and make wide selvages at the end of their rugs. Their embroidery is as exquisitely executed as that of the finest examples of Boukara work. They may use the same octagonal design in their main patterns, or they may use a series of two or three medallions in a series. (See p. 197.) Most Belouch rugs are small in size. When they are large, they are oblong in shape, seldom larger than 7 x 14 feet. This is the maximum inside measurement of a nomadic tent, and since these rugs are woven on a flat loom it can be only as large as the tent's over-all dimensions. (See p. 17, Qashgai tent and woman weaving.) Belouch rugs can be easily identified because of their brownish cast. Quite often natural wool in ivory or camel-brown is used both for the background and within the small design. Belouch rugs are firmly woven, low in nap, and extremely supple. They are very seldom symmetrical in their design or in their over-all shape. Another interesting and characteristic feature is the use of goat's hair for finishing the edge of the rug. Another group of Belouch tribes live in Persia and have been strongly influenced by Persian weaving. These weavers commonly use a series of smaller motifs arranged in rows so that they form diagonal lines across the field of the rug. Everywhere fine Belouch rugs are fast disappearing from the market as these weavers gradually become urbanized and leave behind them the ways of their nomadic ancestors.

We have mentioned the important qualities of rugs which are in the tradition of what is referred to as Mongol or Turkoman work. Actually this tradition is the result not so much of what the Mongol conquerors themselves contributed as it

*Belouch Prayer Rug (Persian)*

Size 3.3 x 4.9

18th Century

A delightful example of Belouch weaving in the best tribal tradition. Sometimes Belouch rugs are confused with Boukaras because of their rich dark red and dark blue coloring. The *gul* or flower design in this rug is a little more detailed than is usual, resembling the treatment in Kurdish and Caucasian rugs. The patterns are well spaced and arranged to give a pleasant diagonal effect.

The prayer point is cleverly designed with stylized *gulal*, symbols of prosperity, on either sides of the prayer niche. Like most nomadic rugs, both ends are extended with kilim weaving, charmingly embroidered.





is the result of their methods of conquest. They cherished the arts and were very proud to have in their service craftsmen in all fields. They preserved and brought together artists and artisans from China, India, Persia, Asia Minor, and Russia, craftsmen with a great diversity of backgrounds but with one over-riding characteristic in common—the need to please the taste and cater to the desire of their conquerors. Evidently what pleased their Mongol lords, and therefore endured, was gay, virile, colorful work, childishly simple in design, and using certain basic colors. To this day in thousands of isolated hamlets scattered all over Central Asia and parts of Afghanistan, Asia Minor, and northern Persia, the kind of rug making design and weave that evolved out of the many diverse elements preserved and perpetuated by the conquering Mongols is still being carried on. In the peasant work of Russia, Poland, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia the same characteristics appear. In India the development of their native artistic talent was changed by the influence of their Mongol emperors, and the influence continues today. Across Asia Minor almost all the weaving we call Turkish is really essentially Seljuk which came out of the same Central Asiatic pool of craftsmen.

A study of Turkoman rugs is superficial unless it is based upon some understanding of the turbulent and exciting history of which they tell us. The Mongol conquerors destroyed hundreds of cities and millions of people. They made their impact on history, not through pacts or treaties between heads of states, but through brutal destruction dictated only by their own whim. It was their whim to spare those whose hands could create the kind of beauty they appreciated. When the soldiers stopped marching, the caravans penetrated even further than the armies had gone. The mind of European man was stimulated by a glimpse into an artistic and cultural world strange and exciting to him. He accepted what

he understood, but always with a mental reservation that because it was so “different” it had only a limited degree of relevance to his world. The East, out of which came the artistic and philosophical ideas which excited him, he looked upon then—and almost to this day—as somehow “backward” or, in the jargon of our day, “underdeveloped.” But we are as much the artistic heirs of the Mongols as we are of the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, or the Persians.



*Avanoz Prayer (Turkish)*

Size 3.7 x 5.2

18th Century

This delicate, almost fragile old prayer rug has a beauty today which is the result of a master craftsman's designing, planning and workmanship more than two hundred years ago, and the mellowing of time. Fortunately this rug has been preserved from the destructive forces of wear, dirt, and moths for the past thirty-five years that it has been in my collection. Before that it saw many years of service in the use for which it was intended—as a prayer rug for a devout Muslim to use five times a day for prayer. The wear of the faithfuls' knees and toes left their marks and repairs were made in these spots years ago. At some period it evidently suffered some abuse, for other repairs have been done, probably once cleverly matched to the original colors, but now faded to shades very different. In general the rug is in excellent condition, with only two blue borders actually missing, one at each end of the rug.



*Turkoman Tentband    Size 1.4 x 44    18th Century*

This is one of the finest examples of the Turkoman tentband, and one of the oldest extant in its original, uncut length of 44 feet. This is the typical circumference of the nomadic Turkoman tent, or *yurt*, which has not changed over the centuries in basic design. The contrast of flat and knotted pile weaving, the delicacy of detail and color, is very much in the tradition of the Kizilayak (Red Foot) Turkomans, whose work continues to be of a superior quality even to this day.





*Three Pairs of Saddle Bags (Khorasan)*

These saddle bags are woven by Kurds who have been living in Khorasan Province since the time of Shah Abbas the First. The center is woven by Kurds living in Kuchan. The two smaller pieces in a small village nearby, Shirvan. All are exquisitely woven although they were intended for hard use transporting merchandise on donkey-back.





An example of Persian script which records the author's grandfather's purchase of a *bagchah*, or a garden. Even in their hand writing the Persians show their decorative skill.





Qashgai mother and daughter weaving on a horizontal loom.



Attractive Persian girls working on extremely fine Isfahan rugs.

Elderly Turkish woman in Bergamo proudly showing us the last rug she would ever weave.



CREDITS: All rugs are from the author's collection. The colored photographs were taken by Sandy Rudnik. All the other photographs with the exception of the picture of the Turkoman weaver on page 163 were taken by the author, Phebe and John Gregorian. We are greatly indebted to Professor Ehsan Yar-Shater for his careful reading of the text and his suggestions. The design of the book and the line drawings are the work of Robert L. Barry. The cartography is by Charles and Norma Wilton and Peggy Michele. Ina Maggioni has spent hours in typing and re-typing of the manuscript.

The greatest credit of all, for endless hours spent on editing, typing, and correcting of text, to my wife Phebe.

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## GLOSSARY

*abrash*

changes in dye lots which give color variations in the finished rug

*abrisham*

silk

*amanat*

consigned goods to be sold for someone's account rather than the seller's

*Anatolia*

a Greek word for Asia Minor

*Arab-Baft*

woven by Arabs

*arbab*

master, landowner

*Armeni-Baft*

woven by Armenians

*baba*

father, or grandfather

*Bachtiari*

the lucky ones

*baksheesh*

tip

*badam*

almond nut (Saraband design)

*Bafte a'ala*

excellent weaving

*baghcha*

small garden

*boorka*

felt cloak

*boston*

in Persian, garden

*buteh*  
twig (pattern)

*chai-khaneh*  
tea house

*Chamur*  
the settled branch of the Yomud tribes

*chapar khaneh*  
post office

*Charwa*  
the nomadic branch of the Yomud tribes

*chodoor* (woven bags)  
woven bags, which are hung both inside  
and outside of the tents to store provisions

*Daghestan*  
In Turkish, mountainous country

*dallal*  
agent who transacts deals for a  
commission

*dasht*  
plains, usually surrounding a village

*deh*  
village (Persian)

*Derebend*  
closed or fortified valley. Darband is  
Persian, having two parts: *dar*, valley,  
and *band*, dam, hindrance

*farangi*  
foreigners, usually applied to Europeans  
and especially the French

*farsak*  
the distance at which you can see a camel  
and distinguish whether it be white or  
black, or the distance at which you can  
first hear the roll of an approaching  
drum, or the distance which a loaded  
mule can travel in an hour—it varies  
from 2 to 5 miles

*farsh*  
In Persian, a rug

*ganj*  
a treasure

*ghali*  
In Persian and Kurdish, a rug

*gishlaq*  
winter grazing grounds

*giz*  
In Turkish, girl. Turkish kilims in this  
country are referred to as "giz" kilims.

*gul*  
a flower or rose; octagon design

*gualal*  
sheaf of wheat

*guli-farangi*  
French or European flowers or roses

*guli-henna*  
henna (plant) flower, used as a design

*Gulistan*  
country of roses or flowers. The Shah's  
palace is called Gulistan. A famous book  
of verse by Saadi

*halli*  
In Turkish, rug



*hamal*

porter equipped with ropes and carrying  
harness to transport goods

*Imams*

saints

*jangal*

forest

*jejim*

a flat weave like kilim weaving. It is  
woven in strips and sewed together

*juval*

a bushel bag to carry or store provisions

*kanares*

runners used on either side of a larger rug

*kand*

town, in Tartar or Turkish

*Karabagh*

black gardens

*kelleyi*

A Persian term applied to rugs that are  
used at the end of large carpets. These  
rugs usually come in sizes 6 to 7 feet wide  
up to 18 to 19 feet long

*khatchli*

cross-like as in Khatchli Boukara Prayer  
rugs with a large cross-like central pattern

*khurjin*

portable bag carried over the shoulders  
or thrown over the animal when riding

*kibitka*

circular tent made of felt

*kilim*

flat weaving — without raised texture or  
nap

*Kismet*

fate

*komarlu* (or *komürlu*)

coal (black)

*khoy*

village (Turkish)

*kursi*

low table placed over underground ovens

*mahi*

fish design or Herati pattern

*maidan*

town square or common

*Meshedi*

a holy pilgrim from Meshed

*namakdum*

salt bags

*namazlik*

In Turkish, prayer rugs

*pahlavan*

champion, usually applied to epic heroes

*pish kash*

a gift from an inferior to a superior

*poshti*

small mat size rugs, usually used as pillow  
covers or tacked against sun-dried mud  
walls to serve as back protectors

*rang*

color

*sabzi*

green. Sabzi bazaar is Teheran's main bazaar today. Near the main entrance was the great produce market.

*saph*

a family prayer rug with multiple niches

*sejjaddeh*

prayer rug. A rug about three feet wide by five feet long

*serais*

open spaces for caravans to load or unload goods

*Shah Nameh*

"Book of Kings," a collection of Persian epic poetry

*shotori*

camel (colored)

*suzanni*—needlework

*teppe*

mound or hill

*torba*

a small bag to carry provisions

*Turk-baft*

woven by Turks

*ustad*

master or foreman who supervises other workers

*voiskas*

tribes or settlements (Russian)

*yurt*

tent (cylindrical)

*yailaq*

summer grazing grounds

*zar*

a measure which varies from 41 to 44 inches in length. All Hamadan and Tabriz rugs are sold by the zar. The metric system is now in common use.

*zarar kardam*

"I am taking a loss"

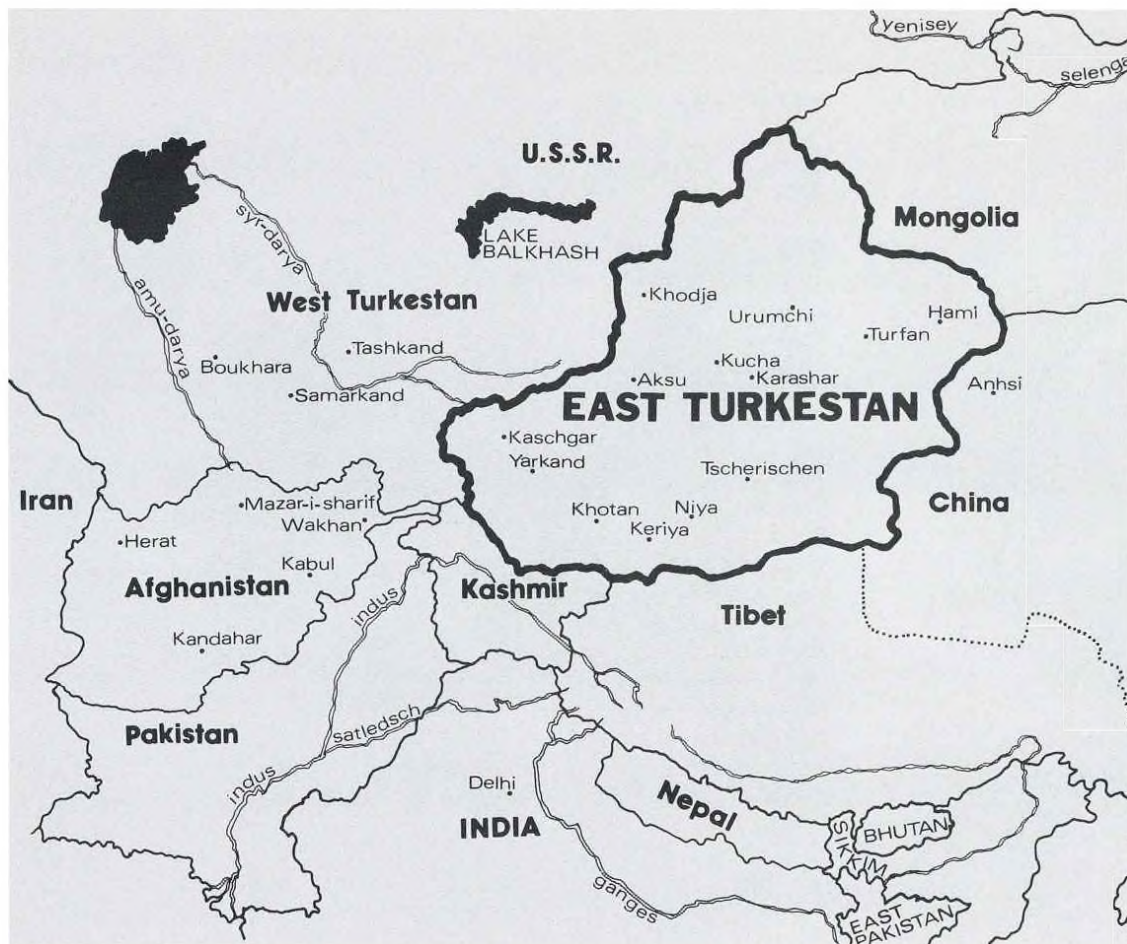
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TURKESTAN RUG WEAVING AREA

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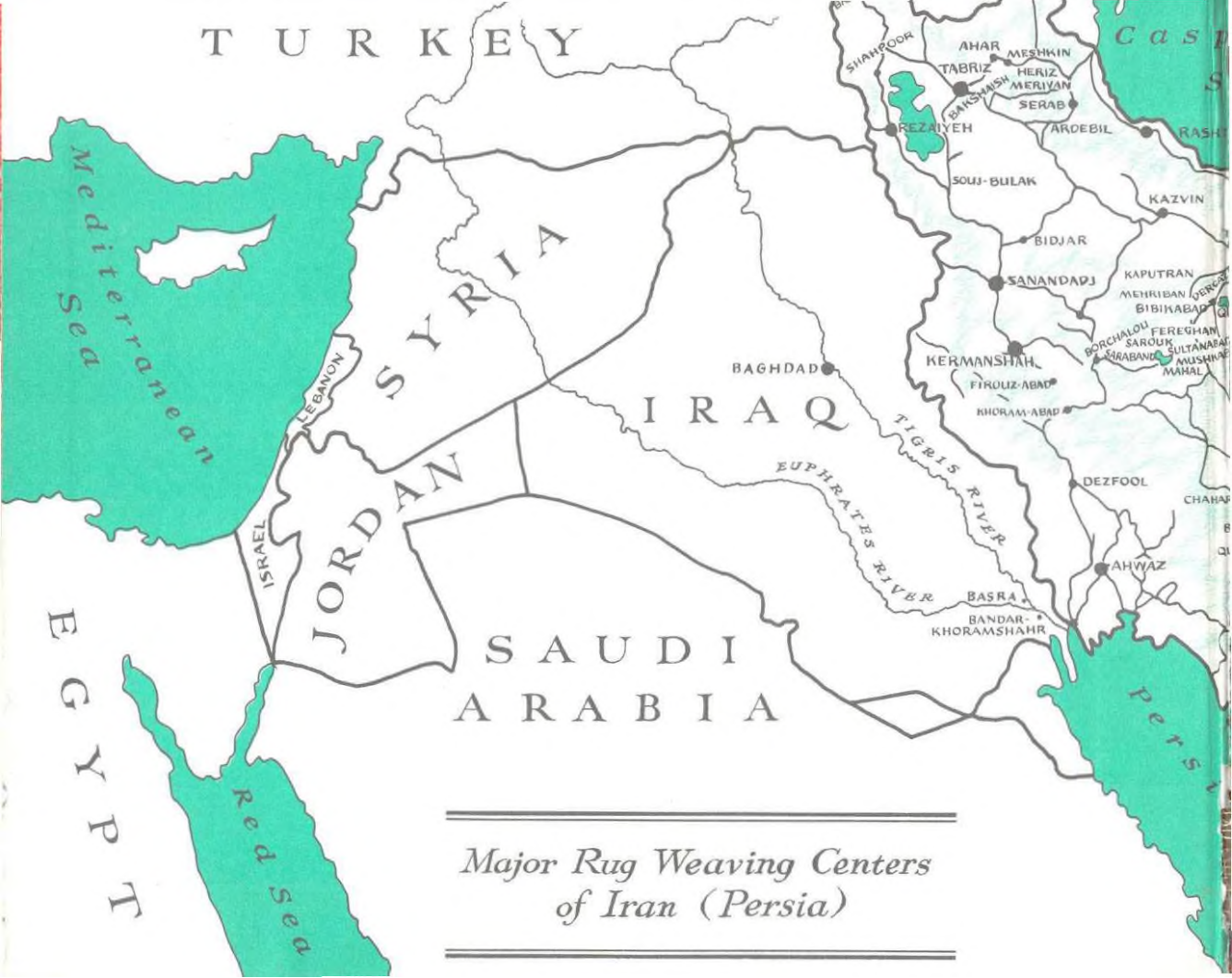
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RUG MAP OF THE CAUCASUS AND TURKESTAN  
SHOWING PLACES OF ORIGIN

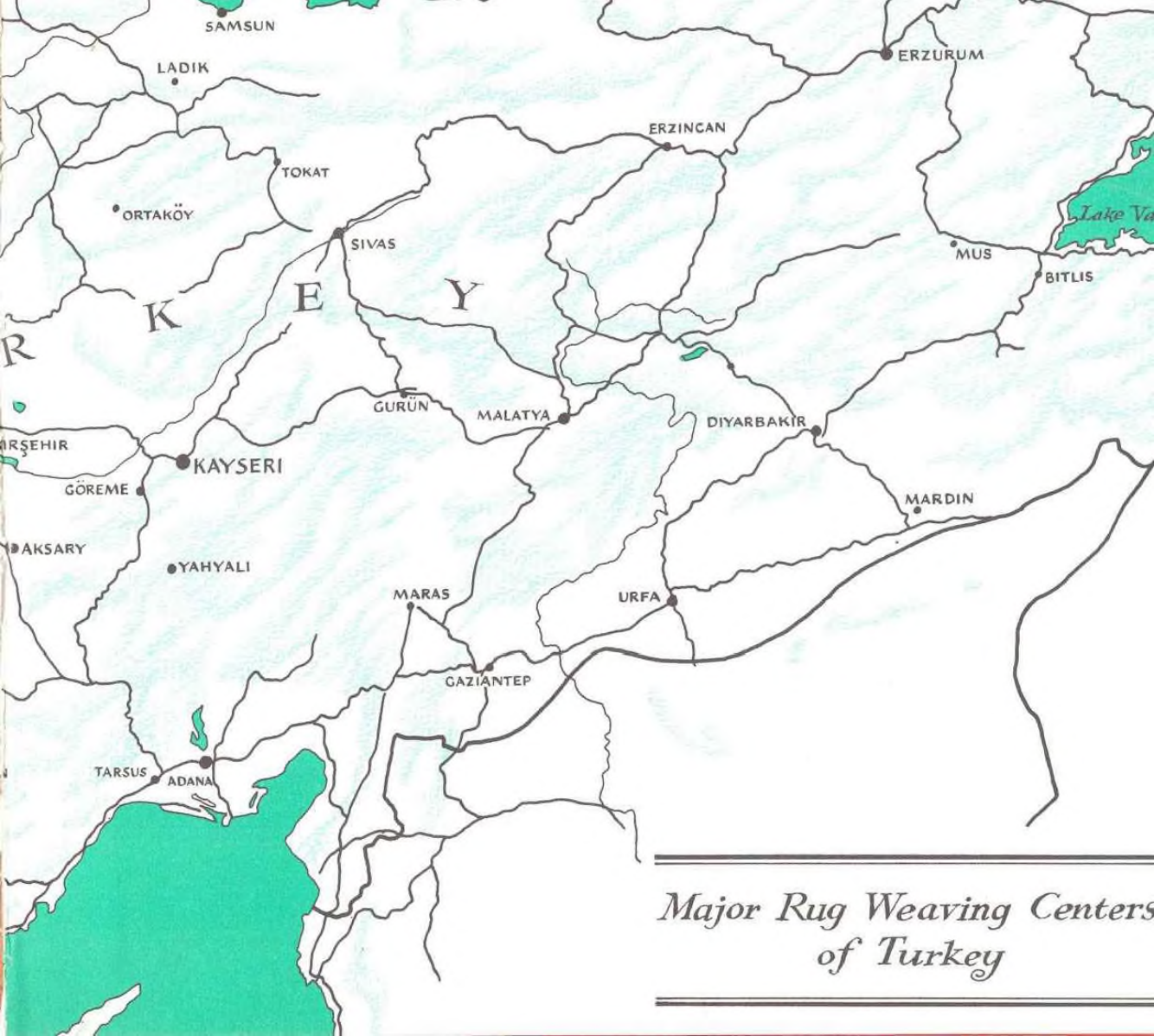




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of Iran (Persia)*

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SAMSUN

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ERZURUM

ERZINCAN

TOKAT

ORTAKÖY

SIVAS

MUS

BITLIS

Lake Van

R K E Y

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MALATYA

DIYARBAKIR

GÖREME

KAYSERİ

MARDIN

AKSARY

YAHYALI

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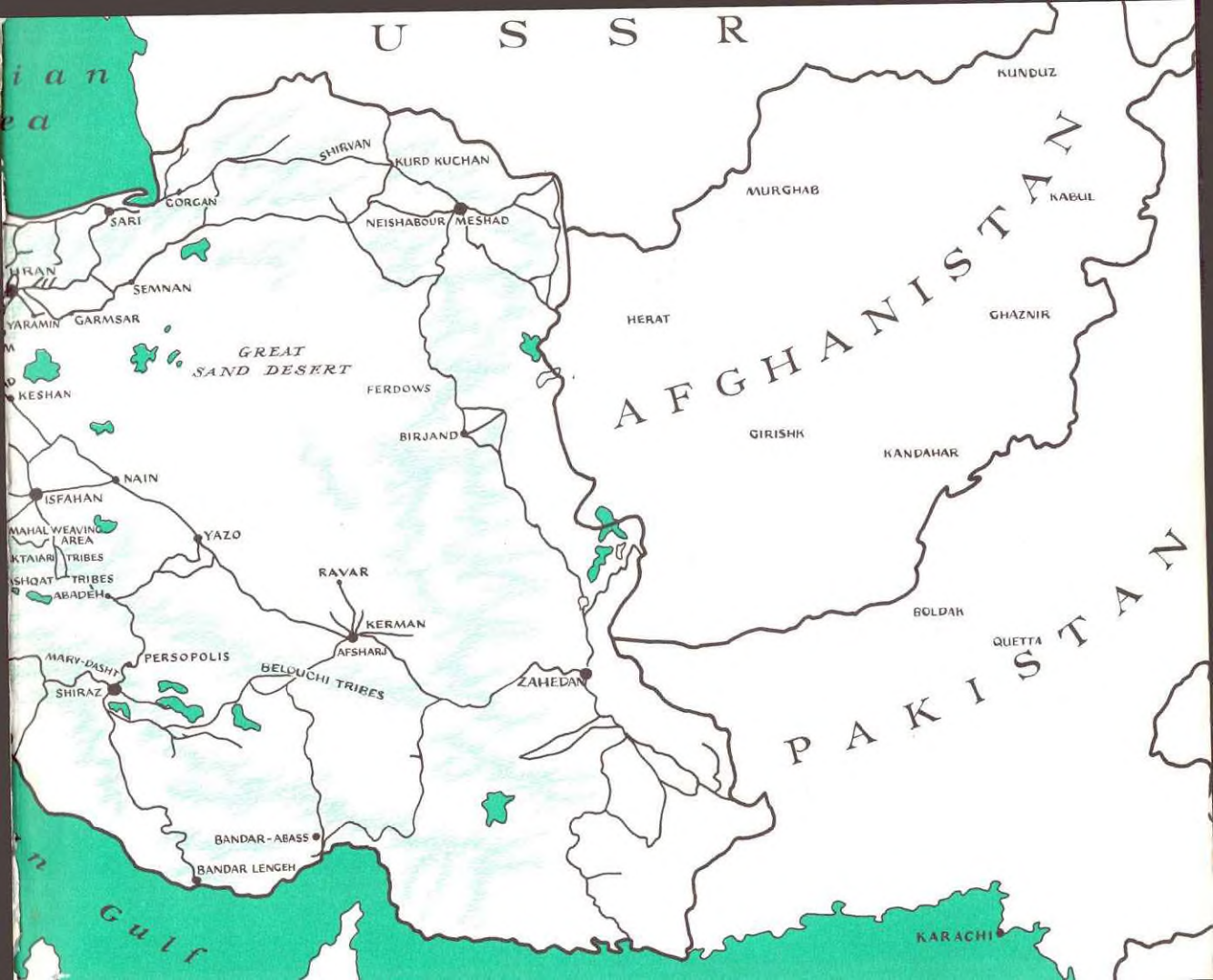
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*Major Rug Weaving Centers  
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U S S R

Indian Ocean

KUNDUZ

SHIRVAN

KURD KUCHAN

MURGHAB

KABUL

CORGAN

SARI

NEISHABOUR / MESHAD

TEHRAN

SEM NAN

YARAMIN GARM SAR

KESHAN

GREAT SAND DESERT

HERAT

GIRISHK

GHAZNIR

FERDOWS

BIRJAND

KANDAHAR

ISFAHAN

MAHAL WEAVING AREA

AKTAIAR TRIBES

ISHQAT TRIBES

ABADEH

MARY-DASHY

SHIRAZ

PERSOPOLIS

BANDAR - ABASS

BANDAR LENGEH

SHIRAZ

AFSHAR

BELOUCHI TRIBES

RAVAR

KERMAN

ZAHEDAN

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PAKISTAN

Persian Gulf

KARACHI

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# ORIENTAL RUGS AND THE STORIES THEY TELL

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**84 Color Plates, 116 Photographs, 3  
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Preface by Dr. Ehsan Yar-Shater,  
Hagop Kevorkian Professor of Iranian  
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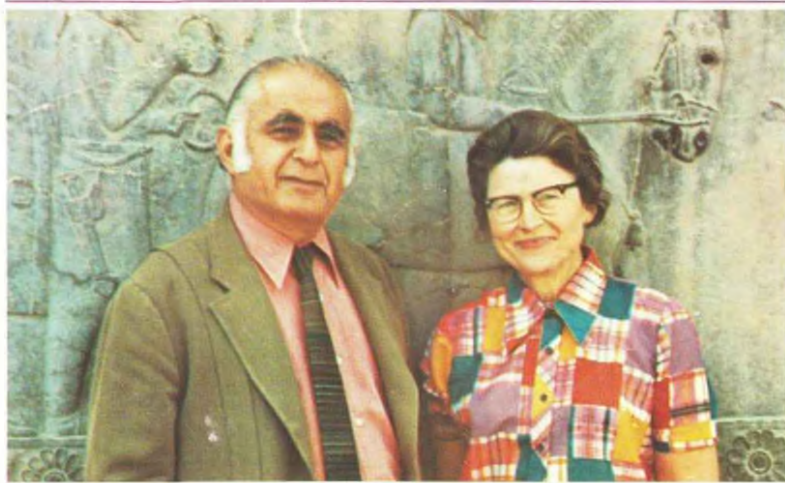
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*Jacket illustration: A Tabriz rug,  
described on page 19 of the text.*

*Continued on inside back flap*



*Arthur and Phebe Gregorian at Persepolis*

Arthur T. Gregorian is owner of the renowned Gregorian Collection of antique Oriental rugs which has toured many of the country's colleges, including Wellesley, Dartmouth, Mount Holyoke, and Wesleyan. He and other members of his family lecture widely and are also importers and retailers of rugs in suburban Boston and Hartford. Uprooted from his native Persia following World War I, Mr. Gregorian came to the United States and studied at Mt. Hermon School and Boston University. The Depression thrust him into the rug business, where he has combined vocation and avocation ever since.

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